BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE

HISTORY of WAR

DE HAVILLAND VAMPIRE

CHURCHILL'S ARCTIC CONVOYS

How icy conditions, U-boat hunters and frosty diplomacy threatened the Eastern Front's Western lifeline

AFRICA'S GREAT WAR

Bloody struggle for the continent

FUTURE

ISSUE 127

"A GOOD CHRISTIAN SOLDIER"

Inspiring Medal of Honor hero who saved his comrades in Normandy

SAS FALKLANDS RAID

Uncover the special forces mission that took out an Argentine air base

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October Record Highlights*

U.S., Order Sons of Italy in America News, 1953-1995 – **NEW**

Rostock, Germany, Parish Register Transcripts, 1580-1945 – **UPDATED**

Pyrénées-Orientales, France, Censuses, 1806-1936 – **NEW**

*Record collections subject to change.

SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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Above: *Crewmen of HMS Scylla clear ice from the decks as they transport supplies to the Soviet Union*

CONTRIBUTORS

ANTHONY TUCKER-JONES

Anthony is a former defence intelligence officer, turned historian, whose latest book *Churchill: Master and Commander* explores the military career of the wartime leader. Starting on page 26 he recounts the tricky diplomacy on the fringes of WWII's treacherous Arctic Convoys.

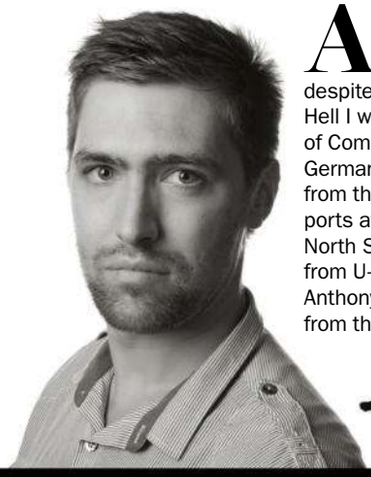
MURRAY DAHM

The Macedonian domination of the Greek City States came to a head with the Battle of Chaeronea (338 BCE), which saw Philip II, Alexander's father, face off against an Athenian-Theban alliance. Murray recounts the battle on page 34.

SERHII PLOKHY

The roots of the Russo-Ukrainian War go back far beyond the 21st century, and even beyond the 20th, and are key to understanding the current conflict. This issue, Professor Serhii Plokhy, author of an acclaimed study of the war, discusses its origins and historical parallels (p66).

Welcome



After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Britain and its allies set about planning ways to supply their new unlikely co-belligerent with supplies, machines and materiel. This was despite Churchill's own fervent opposition to communism. "If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons," he famously remarked. Just a couple of months after German tanks smashed through the Red Army, the first convoy departed from the United Kingdom, loaded with supplies, bound for the Russian ports at Murmansk and Archangel. The supply line, stretching around the North Sea and off the Norwegian coast, was highly vulnerable to attacks from U-boats, as well as the treacherous Arctic conditions. This issue, Anthony Tucker-Jones explores how the convoys were also under threat from the icy relationship between Churchill and Stalin.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

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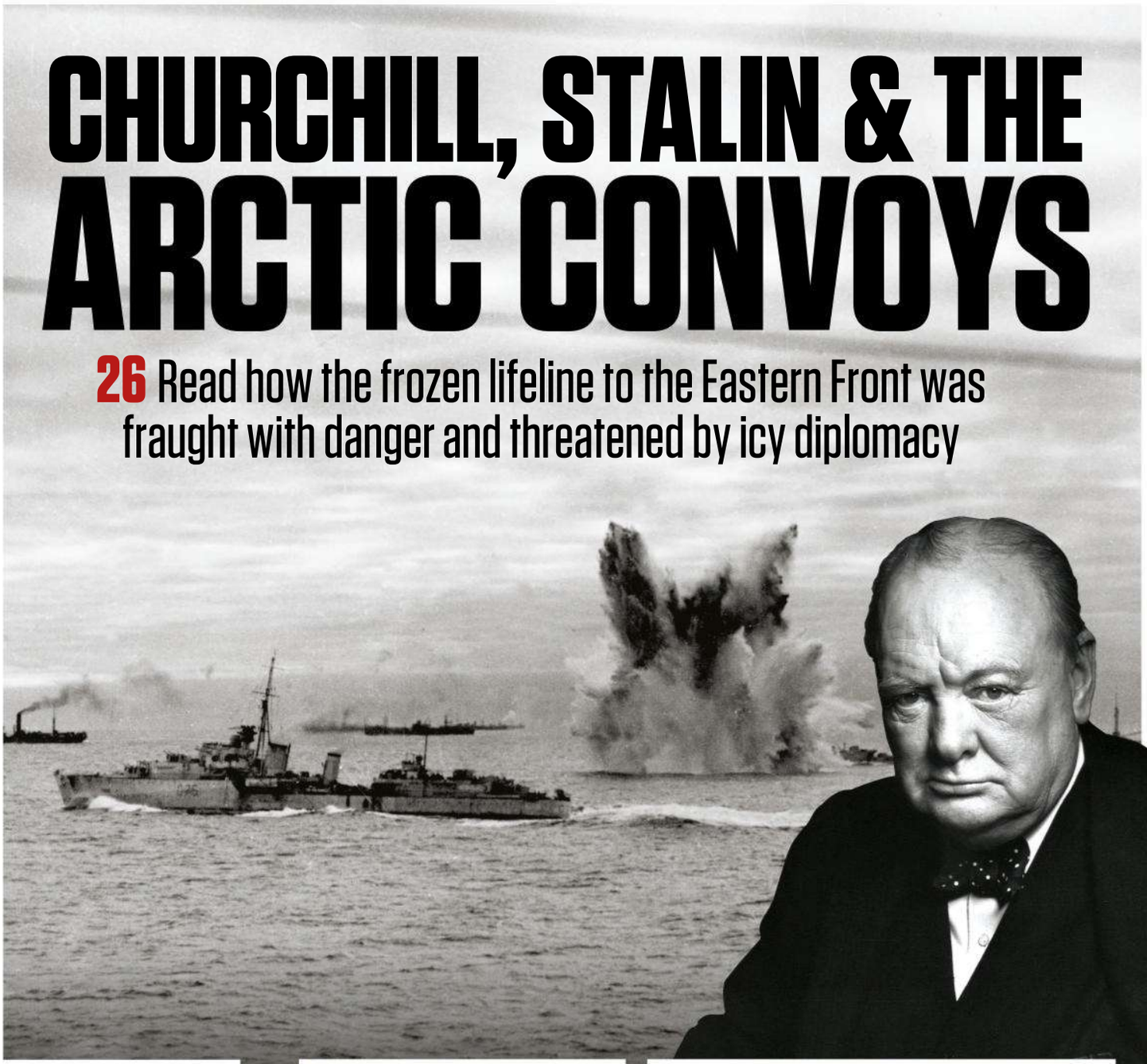

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Pancho Villa's golden gun

WAR in FOCUS

RETREAT FROM RUSSIA

1812

This oil-on-canvas painting of the Grande Armée's retreat from Russia is by Nicolas Toussaint Charlet, a French military artist known for his striking portrayals of pride and regret for France's revolutionary past and discontent with its present. After over-committing in Moscow, Napoleon's army was forced into a costly retreat. Men died in their thousands, suffering from the elements and Cossack guerilla attacks, which increased in severity as the Grande Armée became increasingly broken up.

© Getty

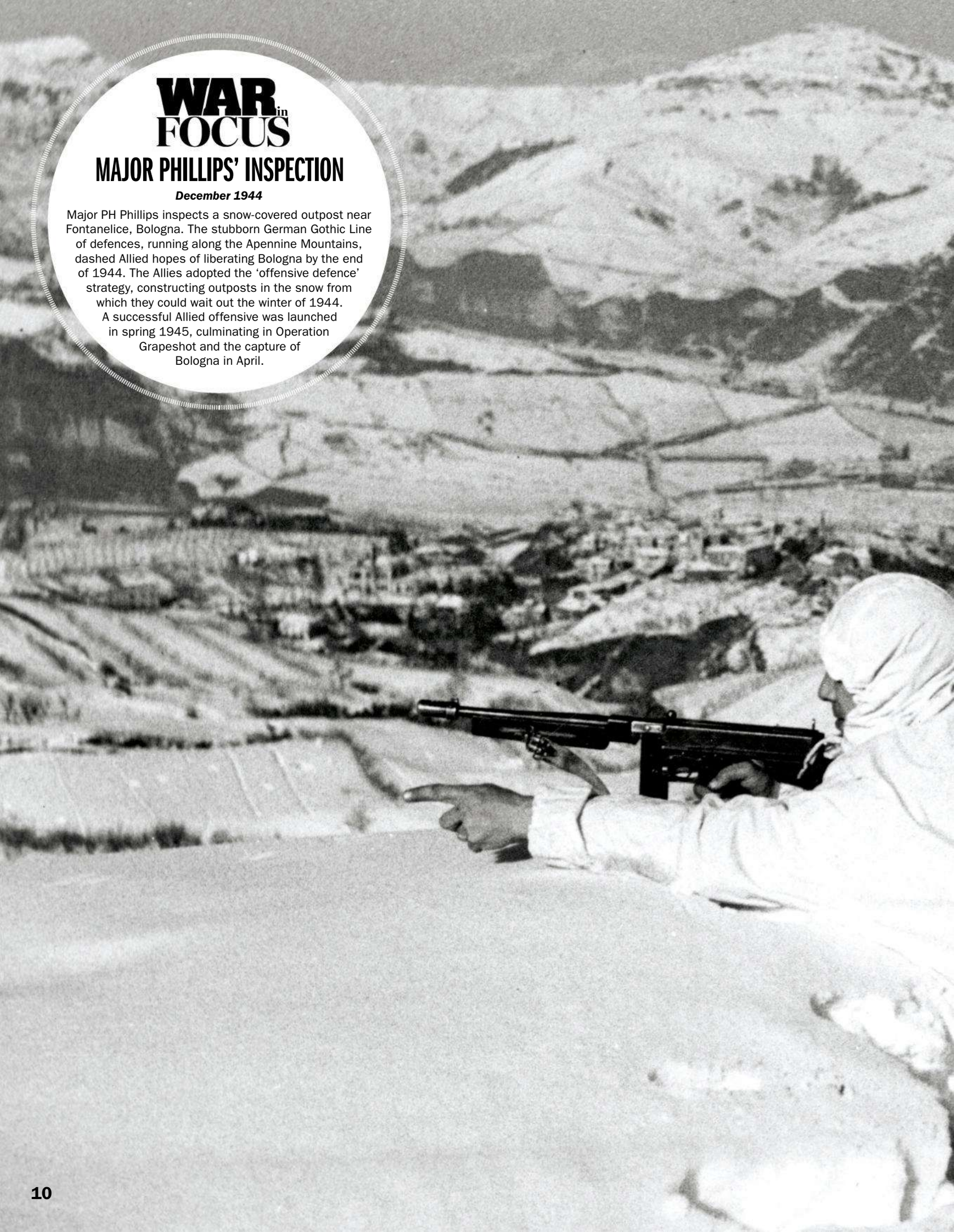
© Alamy

WAR in FOCUS

BATTLE OF WEIHAIWEI

1895

General Ôdera Attacking the Hundred Foot Cliff With All His Might is a paper triptych by Ogata Gekko portraying the death of General Ôdera during the last battle of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). He was leading his men in an attack against land fortifications in harsh blizzard conditions when an artillery shell from the Chinese cruiser Jiyuan struck the ground nearby. Shrapnel from the blast hit the general, making him the highest-ranked of the 17,000 Japanese men who died in the conflict.



WAR in FOCUS

MAJOR PHILLIPS' INSPECTION

December 1944

Major PH Phillips inspects a snow-covered outpost near Fontanelice, Bologna. The stubborn German Gothic Line of defences, running along the Apennine Mountains, dashed Allied hopes of liberating Bologna by the end of 1944. The Allies adopted the 'offensive defence' strategy, constructing outposts in the snow from which they could wait out the winter of 1944. A successful Allied offensive was launched in spring 1945, culminating in Operation Grapeshot and the capture of Bologna in April.

© Getty

TIMELINE OF

AFRICA'S GREAT WAR

The final act of the 'Scramble for Africa' is played out as Europe's bloody conflict spreads across the continent

A shooting exercise at the police unit in German Togoland takes place under the direction of a colonial officer

TOGOLAND CAMPAIGN 03

The Great War comes to West Africa with the Togoland Campaign. Forces from neighbouring British and French colonies converge on Kamina, drawing German troops out of the coastal capital Lomé. German engagements merely delay the unstoppable Allied advance, and they surrender Togoland by the end of August.

6-26 August 1914

1884-85

BERLIN CONFERENCE SECURES NEUTRALITY

Aware of the fragility of their control in Africa, and terrified that instability could open a window of opportunity for rebellion, colonial leaders agree that the colonies would remain neutral in the event of a European war.

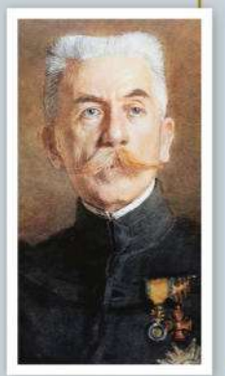
Discussions held between European and US plenipotentiaries at the Berlin Conference

1914-21

ZAIAN WAR 01

Colonial leaders' concerns about European war are justified when the Berber tribes resist French expansion into the Atlas Mountains. While the French see early successes, they struggle once war in Europe breaks out. After sending infantry, cavalry and artillery to the Western Front, colonial French forces do regain full control until pacification in 1934.

Louis-Hubert Lyautey was a French general in charge of 70,000 troops in North Africa, responsible for squashing rebellions



6 August 1914

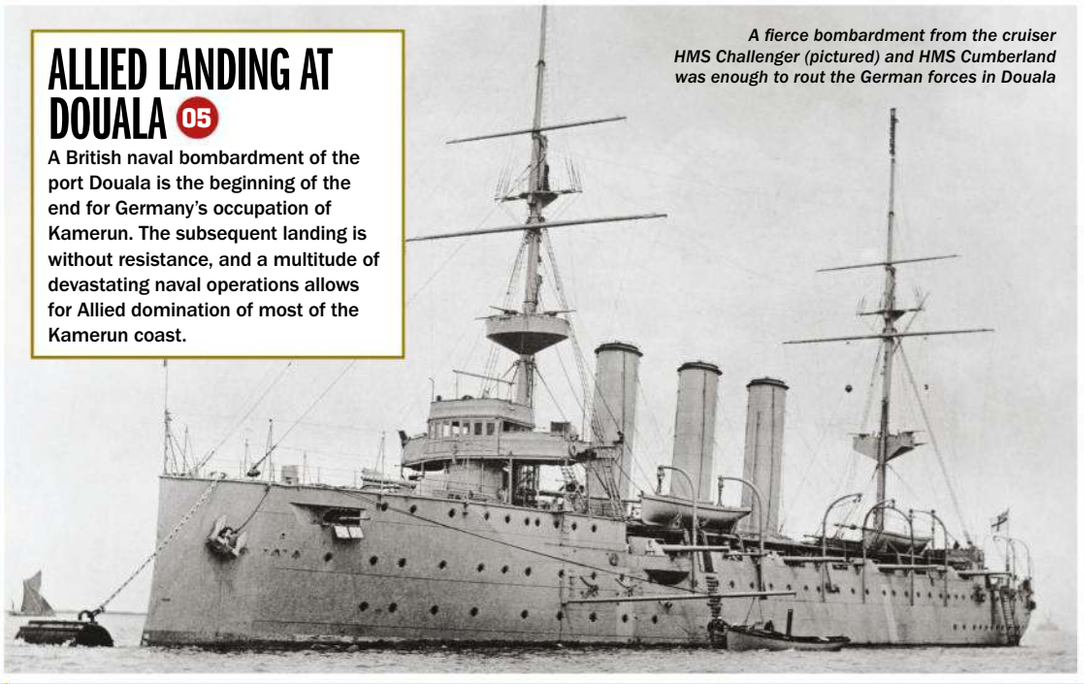
KAMERUN CAMPAIGN BEGINS 02

The neutrality agreement lasts just a week before the French and British high command orders their colonial forces to begin attacking German colonies. The first shot between colonial powers is fired during the joint invasion of German Kamerun (now Cameroon) by the empires of Britain, France and Belgium.

A German officer inspects colonial African soldiers in Kamerun. Indigenous Africans fought on both sides, often forcibly conscripted, during the Great War

ALLIED LANDING AT DOUALA 05

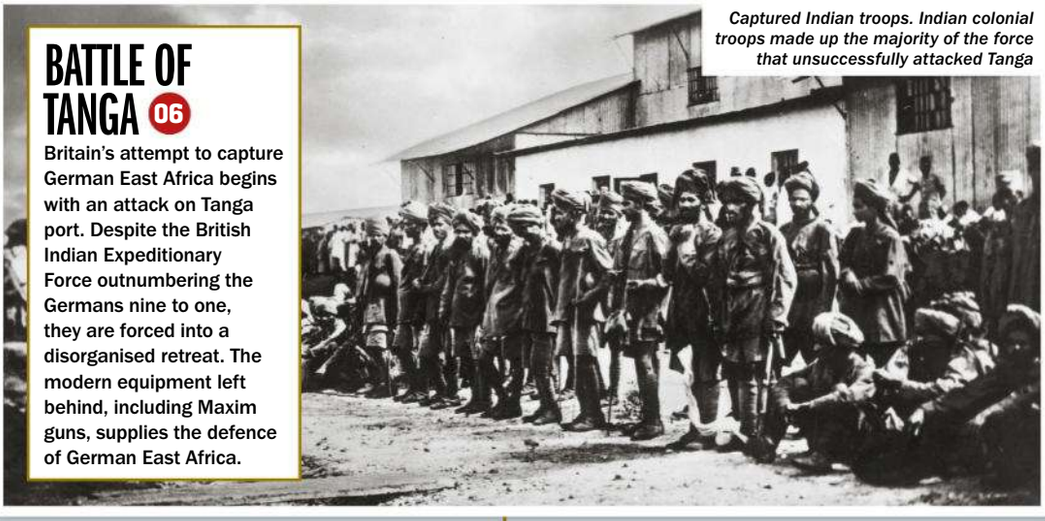
A British naval bombardment of the port Douala is the beginning of the end for Germany's occupation of Kamerun. The subsequent landing is without resistance, and a multitude of devastating naval operations allows for Allied domination of most of the Kamerun coast.



A fierce bombardment from the cruiser HMS Challenger (pictured) and HMS Cumberland was enough to rout the German forces in Douala

BATTLE OF TANGA 06

Britain's attempt to capture German East Africa begins with an attack on Tanga port. Despite the British Indian Expeditionary Force outnumbering the Germans nine to one, they are forced into a disorganised retreat. The modern equipment left behind, including Maxim guns, supplies the defence of German East Africa.

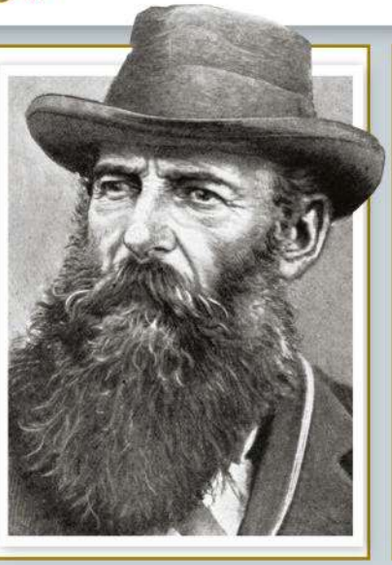


Captured Indian troops. Indian colonial troops made up the majority of the force that unsuccessfully attacked Tanga

15 September 1914 — 26-27 December 1914 — 3-5 November 1914 — January 1915 – November 1918

MARITZ REBELLION BEGINS 04

South Africa's agreement to fight for the Allies meets fierce opposition from army insiders. Travelling to a meeting to arrange the resignation of leading army officers, rebel General Koos de la Rey is mistakenly shot at a police roadblock. Suspicious of foul play, Lieutenant Colonel Manie Maritz allies with Germany, beginning the Maritz Rebellion.



A portrait of Koos de la Rey, whose death triggered an uprising challenging monolithic support for the Allied Powers in South Africa

SENUSSI CAMPAIGN 07

The Ottoman Empire persuades the Senussi nomads of Libya and Egypt to launch a jihad against colonial occupation. However, the British use aircraft and light motor batteries for decisive, rapid action. This revolution in mobile desert warfare is starkly different to the grinding, static trench warfare in Western Europe.

Ships of the Air versus Ships of the Desert by British officer F de Haenen shows the aerial bombing of a Senussi ammunition convoy

Images © Alamy, Getty

31 May – 10 June 1915

The fortress at Garua was well protected against infantry attacks, but left its occupants exposed to heavy artillery

KAMERUN CAMPAIGN TIDE TURNS 08

Britain's capture of the fort at Garua ends Germany's ability to move freely in Kamerun and raid neighbouring British Nigeria. Relentless bombardment from borrowed naval guns continues for ten days until surrender is inevitable. Losing Garua isolates the remaining German troops at Mora stronghold, Northern Kamerun.

11 July 1915

DESTRUCTION OF THE KÖNIGSBERG 09

The Königsberg light cruiser, the most powerful ship in the Indian Ocean, is hiding in the Rufiji Delta (Tanzania) for repair when the Royal Navy discovers it in October 1914. Multiple attempts to sink the vessel fail, but eventually the HMS Mersey brings its six 150mm guns to bear on the Königsberg with devastating effect.

The destruction of the Königsberg made Britain the strongest naval power in the Indian Ocean

5-6 November 1915

BAY OF SOLLUM DESTRUCTION 10

Allied shipping in the Africa campaign faces a constant U-boat threat. SM U-35 is particularly destructive in early November, sinking the steamer HMS Tara and the gunboat Abbas, and severely damaging the gunboat Nur el Bahr. Captured sailors are brought ashore and transferred into Senussi custody.

U-35, which sank 220 merchant ships during the Great War, is pictured sinking SS Maplewood carrying cargo from Tunis

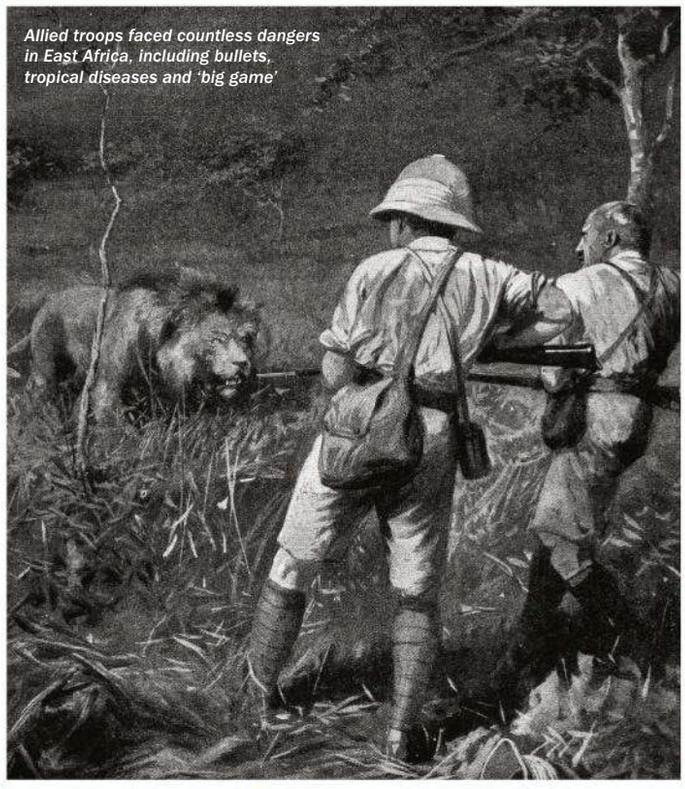
Mar

ADUBI WAR 13

Turmoil within the colonies continues as conflict in Africa between the European powers comes to an end. The Adubi War begins when the relatively independent Egba people resist colonial taxation. A force of 30,000 rebels battles colonial troops for three weeks before its leaders are killed or arrested. In the aftermath of the fighting, the British consolidate their control, introducing forced labour.

BREAKTHROUGH IN EAST AFRICA 12

Allied progress in East Africa finally arrives when General Jan Smuts assumes command and brings South African reinforcements. Smuts' offensive from the north, assisted by Belgian forces from the west, eventually forces the Germans into Portuguese Mozambique, where they plunder Portuguese garrisons.



Allied troops faced countless dangers in East Africa, including bullets, tropical diseases and 'big game'

Both sides conscripted local African porters, treating them as dispensable; 45,000 Kenyan porters died in the Great War – 13 percent of the male population

PEACE IN AFRICA? 15

Armistice is not the end of colonial suffering for indigenous Africans, who continue to die of disease and famine resulting from the heavy looting which defined the African theatre. During the conflict 750,000 Africans perish, yet many colonies don't gain liberation until the 1960s.

rch – November 1916 | March 1916 – November 1917 | June – July 1918 | 11 November 1918 | 25 November 1918

INVASION OF DARFUR 11

In the chaos of the African theatre, colonialists find opportunities to expand their influence to the handful of independent territories. Independent Darfur is finally annexed as a province of British Sudan in 1916, nominally over Sultan Ali Dinar's refusal to pay tribute to Sudan. Tensions between the Sudanese government and Fur separatists continue to this day.

The Daily Press delights as the Fur Army is sent into a retreat by British artillery and Maxim machine guns

ARMISTICE DAY 14

Matters are complicated in Africa when Major General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, commander of Germany's East Africa forces, refuses to accept that Germany has lost the war. It takes a further two weeks of tentative truce before he agrees to surrender and return his men to Germany.

Lettow-Vorbeck only unconditionally surrendered after a "judicious mixture of firmness and bluff" from the War Office

Images © Alamy, Getty

FIRST SHOTS

Most colonists did not want the war to come to Africa, while those under the colonial boot would also suffer greatly when war spread to their land

In contrast to Europe, where competing powers were always jostling for territory, the situation in Africa was calm when war broke out in 1914. The colonial powers had settled on their territorial borders in 1890, when the great 'scramble for Africa' had concluded, and there wasn't much friction between German, French, Belgian, British and Portuguese holdings. There was little to tempt Britain and its allies in Germany's African colonies, and although the Germans harboured ambitions of establishing a vast swathe of colonial possessions across Africa (a new 'Fatherland' to be known as German Central Africa), they did not possess the means to achieve this. Germany, therefore, would have happily accepted the status quo in return for being left alone.

Its colonial neighbours had no intention of obliging. German territories may have been largely unappetising, but they were still enemy territories, and therefore fair game. The French had their eye on Germany's West African colonies, while South Africa wanted German South West Africa and the British coveted the economically promising German East Africa. There was also the fact that Germany's colonies could interfere with naval operations and supply routes if left untroubled, if only through their radio stations.

The fighting forces in Africa would be remarkably similar – small units with European officers leading native rank and file, known as askari. Britain struggled to find troops to push its claims across the continent, being unwilling to bring large numbers of Africans into the ranks. Imported troops from India would be tried at first, and then South Africans, before native troops took over the fighting towards the end of the war.

Machine guns were the dominant force on the battlefield, with the use of artillery limited, and in every theatre the Germans found themselves forced onto the defensive, eking out meagre supplies and capturing what they could from often careless and wasteful enemies.

As well as the German Schutztruppe (defence force), there were other formidable opponents in Africa. Europeans and Indians were highly vulnerable to the harsh environment. Even before deadly tropical diseases were considered, the climate was draining and there were scarier things than lions and crocodiles to contend with – an infestation of 'jiggers', tiny fleas that burrowed under toenails, was one of the more excruciating delights awaiting anyone who set foot on the continent.

German Togoland

The very first shots of the First World War were fired in German Togoland, where a combined British-French force staged an invasion in August 1914. The territory was always going to be vulnerable, with French Dahomey to its north and east and the Gold Coast (run by Britain) on its western border.

The German authorities in Togoland had been eager to avoid conflict, even appealing to the British and French not to set a bad example by allowing native Africans to see Europeans fighting among themselves. These entreaties were brushed aside, with French forces moving on 6 August and the British following suit the next day – the capital, Lomé, was captured without resistance on the 9th.

A radio station at Lamina, which could be used to coordinate the operations of German naval vessels in the Atlantic, was the primary goal of the British, but they encountered stiff resistance when they tried to cross the Khra River, Lieutenant George Thompson earning the dubious distinction of being the first British officer to be killed in action during the war.

French troops then moved into the German rear, forcing them to abandon their strong position, and they were soon demolishing the radio towers that were the focus of the Allied operation. On 26 August the colony surrendered, and the first 'campaign' of the war had cost just 83 British casualties, along with 54 French and 41 German. It was a very limited start to the Great War.

Cameroon

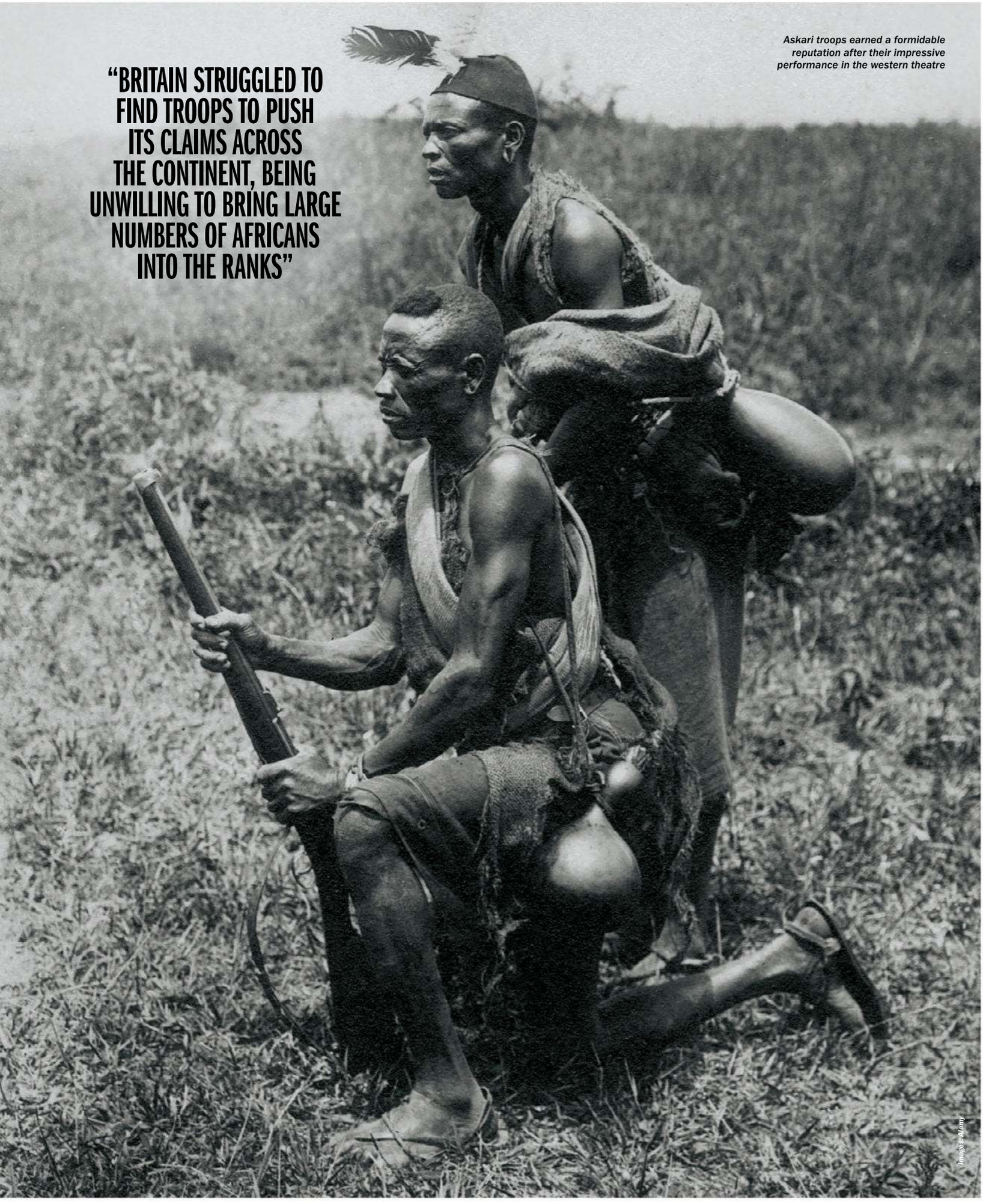
More significant fighting took place in Cameroon (known as 'Kamerun' at the time), where a German colony was again surrounded by hostile neighbours. Another appeal for neutrality from the Germans was rejected and British and French forces (the British operating from Nigeria and the French from French Equatorial Africa) moved into the German territory.

Resistance was stiff, with German victories coming at small-scale but sharp engagements at Nsanakong and Garua. However, with superior enemy numbers telling, the German forces were forced to withdraw, setting up defensive positions in the interior of the country in 1915 and attempting to stave off multiple incursions.

A small-scale raid into Nigeria gave the Germans hope, but they were repulsed and soon faced defeat. Rather than surrender to their enemies, the bulk of the Germans retreated across the border with neutral Rio Muni (a Spanish colony). By the middle of February 1916, Cameroon was in Allied hands.

The experience gained in these limited campaigns was useful and Britain recognised the fine performance of soldiers from the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Troops from the western theatre would soon find themselves shipped eastwards to take part in the far more substantial campaigns fought there.

Native African troops known as askari were led by European officers in the fighting



Askari troops earned a formidable reputation after their impressive performance in the western theatre

"BRITAIN STRUGGLED TO FIND TROOPS TO PUSH ITS CLAIMS ACROSS THE CONTINENT, BEING UNWILLING TO BRING LARGE NUMBERS OF AFRICANS INTO THE RANKS"

Image © Alamy

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

Though ambivalent in its attitude to Britain, South Africa played a leading role in two African campaigns

In common with the other German colonies in Africa, there was no enthusiasm for war when news of the calamitous events in Europe finally reached German South West Africa (now Namibia). This does not mean the German authorities were indifferent to the war – they remained patriotic, but saw that the fate of their colony would be decided on the battlefields of Europe. If Germany prevailed there, then colonial possessions would be safe.

The homeland did not hold German South West Africa in high regard. In fact, at the end of the 19th century the decision had been taken to abandon the colony entirely in the event of war with Britain, in order to focus efforts on retaining German East Africa. When war did come, however, that decision was forgotten.

Theodor Seitz, governor of the colony, went to great lengths to stay on good terms with his neighbour, South Africa, which had only recently been taken into the British Empire following the Boer Wars. Military parades and displays of strength were avoided but there was little hope of remaining undisturbed.

South Africa was a divided nation. Lingering anti-British sentiment was an issue, and many communities reacted with pleasure to the news of a major war in Europe, and relished stories of early German successes.

"LOUIS BOTHA AND JAN SMUTS SAW THIS NEW WAR AS A CHANCE TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR NATION'S STRENGTH"

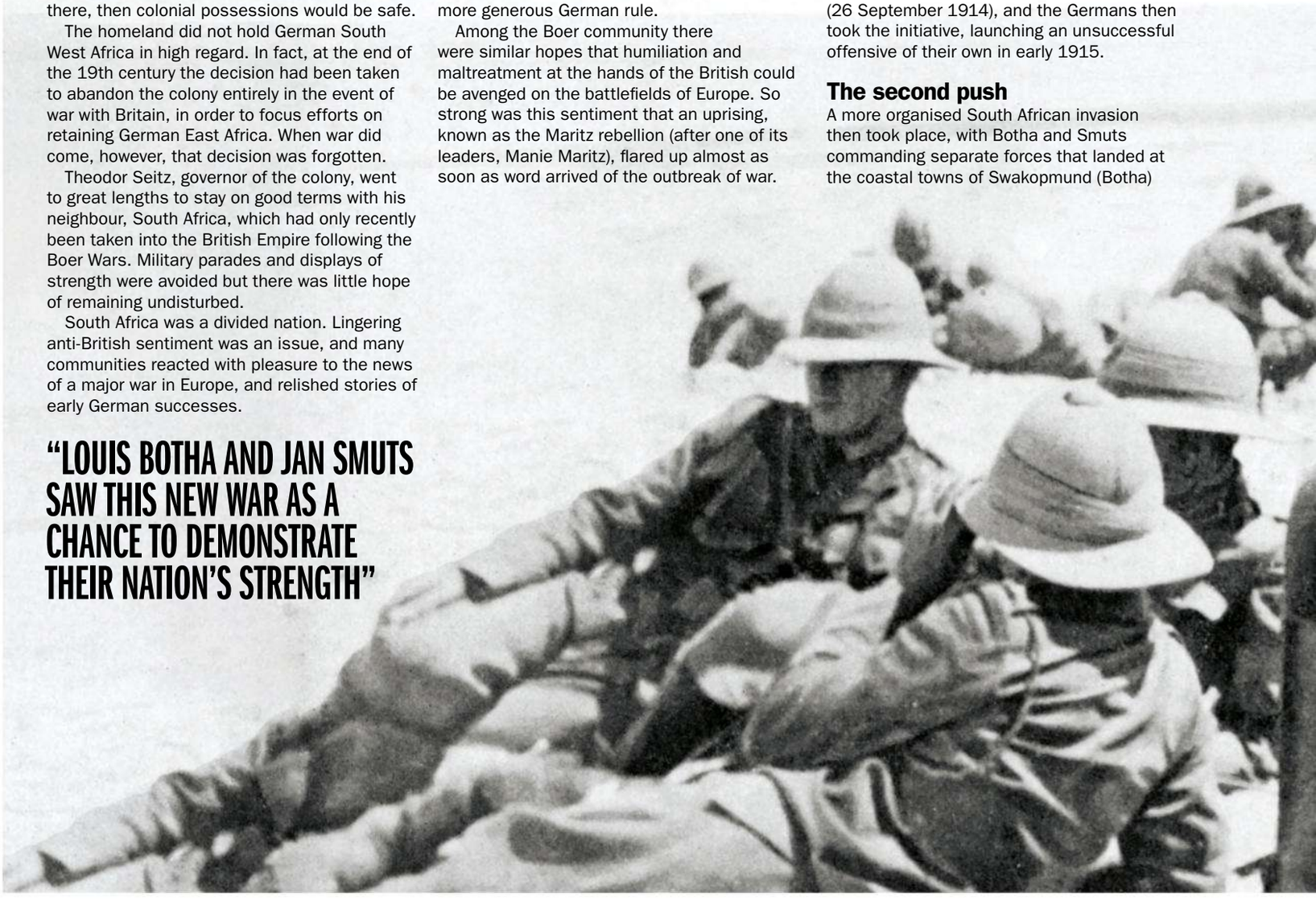
The spreading of Christianity to the native populations rebounded on the white ruling class, with preachers able to point out that war was far from the Christian ideal. Other elements of the population saw the war as an opportunity for wrongs to be righted. Prominent among these were the Zulus, on the southeast coast of South Africa, who hoped that British defeat might lead to the collapse of South Africa and the restoration of Zulu lands under more generous German rule.

Among the Boer community there were similar hopes that humiliation and maltreatment at the hands of the British could be avenged on the battlefields of Europe. So strong was this sentiment that an uprising, known as the Maritz rebellion (after one of its leaders, Manie Maritz), flared up almost as soon as word arrived of the outbreak of war. As many as 12,000 disaffected Boers joined the rebellion, but it was quickly stamped out.

Such anti-British sentiments were not shared at the top of the South African political structure, where Boer War veterans Louis Botha and Jan Smuts saw this new war as a chance to demonstrate their nation's strength. Things did not start well, however. Their first foray into German South West Africa ended with defeat at the Battle of Sandfontein (26 September 1914), and the Germans then took the initiative, launching an unsuccessful offensive of their own in early 1915.

The second push

A more organised South African invasion then took place, with Botha and Smuts commanding separate forces that landed at the coastal towns of Swakopmund (Botha)



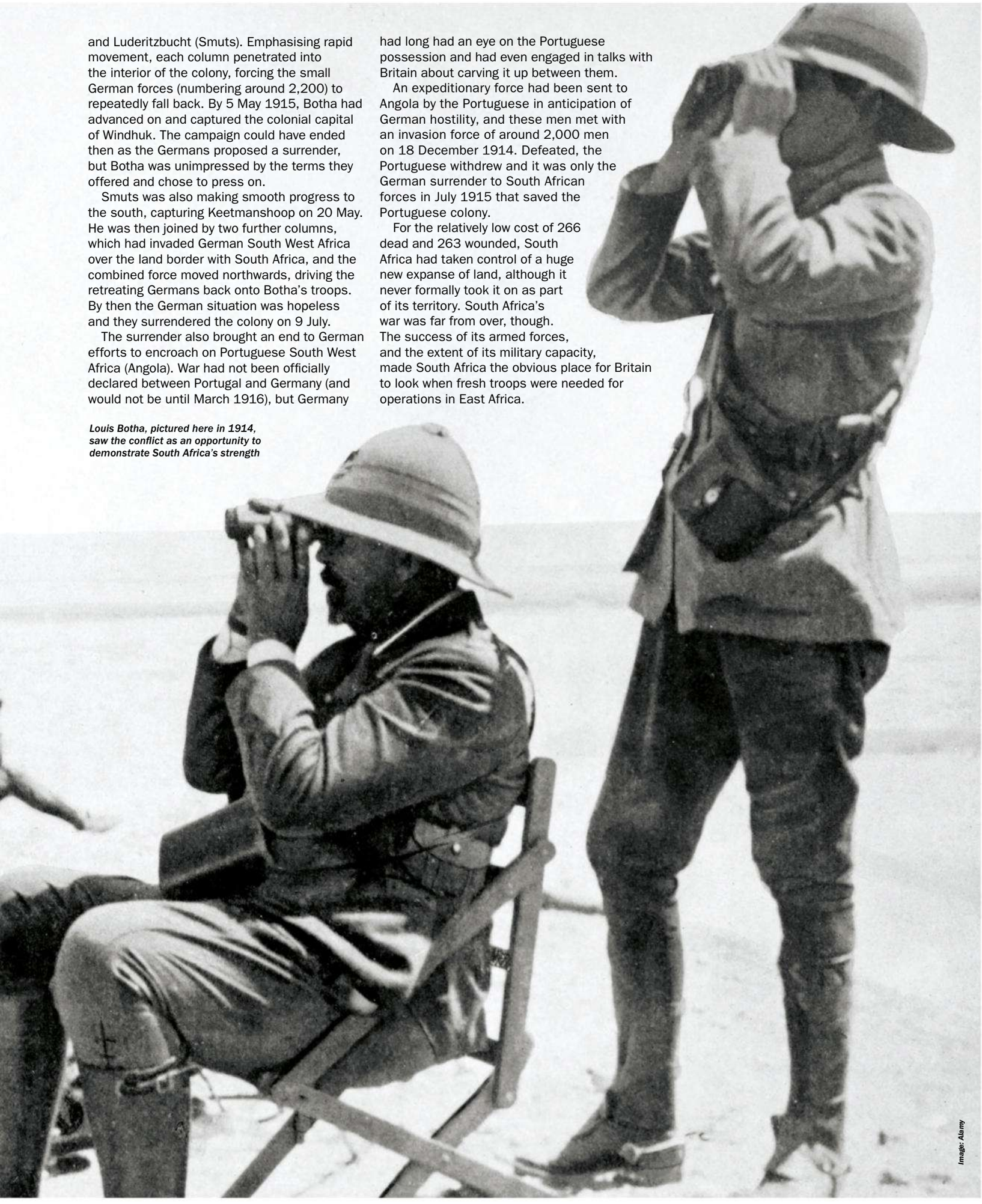
and Luderitzbucht (Smuts). Emphasising rapid movement, each column penetrated into the interior of the colony, forcing the small German forces (numbering around 2,200) to repeatedly fall back. By 5 May 1915, Botha had advanced on and captured the colonial capital of Windhuk. The campaign could have ended then as the Germans proposed a surrender, but Botha was unimpressed by the terms they offered and chose to press on.

Smuts was also making smooth progress to the south, capturing Keetmanshoop on 20 May. He was then joined by two further columns, which had invaded German South West Africa over the land border with South Africa, and the combined force moved northwards, driving the retreating Germans back onto Botha's troops. By then the German situation was hopeless and they surrendered the colony on 9 July.

The surrender also brought an end to German efforts to encroach on Portuguese South West Africa (Angola). War had not been officially declared between Portugal and Germany (and would not be until March 1916), but Germany had long had an eye on the Portuguese possession and had even engaged in talks with Britain about carving it up between them.

An expeditionary force had been sent to Angola by the Portuguese in anticipation of German hostility, and these men met with an invasion force of around 2,000 men on 18 December 1914. Defeated, the Portuguese withdrew and it was only the German surrender to South African forces in July 1915 that saved the Portuguese colony.

For the relatively low cost of 266 dead and 263 wounded, South Africa had taken control of a huge new expanse of land, although it never formally took it on as part of its territory. South Africa's war was far from over, though. The success of its armed forces, and the extent of its military capacity, made South Africa the obvious place for Britain to look when fresh troops were needed for operations in East Africa.



Louis Botha, pictured here in 1914, saw the conflict as an opportunity to demonstrate South Africa's strength

Image: Alamy

STORM IN THE EAST

Fighting in German East Africa was to go on for longer than anywhere else in the world

Most of Germany's African colonies were of limited interest to the British, but German East Africa (modern-day Tanzania) was a tempting territory with economic potential. Elsewhere on the continent, Allied armies had encountered little difficulty in dislodging the small military forces holding German possessions, but the story was very different in German East Africa. It wasn't so much that they had a large army (available manpower was never more than 15,000 and usually much less), but more that they were commanded by a man of genuine military capability.

Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck understood that he could not defeat the British, but he knew he had a vast territory to operate in and so waged his campaign in a daring and innovative way. His only objective was to tie down British troops (preventing them from being sent to Europe) by keeping his own small army intact.

"So long as we continued to resist," he wrote as the campaign was nearing its end, "so long the enemy must pour resources into Africa and thus weaken his reinforcements in Europe. We were a knife in his side, and the more we turned it, the more he bled."

The Indian Expeditionary Force

Britain had limited military assets on hand in their own territory of British East Africa (modern-day Kenya). Just three battalions of the King's African Rifles were on hand, for a total of around 2,400 troops. German numbers were around the same, but they expanded (by recruitment and the calling-up of reserves) until they fielded around 12,000 African troops and 3,000 Europeans.

Britain was unwilling to expand its native forces in this way, and therefore called on the vast resources of its empire, shipping in Indian troops for the opening gambit of the war – an attempt to seize the port of Tanga. A dreadfully mishandled amphibious assault started on the evening of 2 November 1914, and quickly developed into a shambolic defeat. The British forces moved so slowly than von Lettow was able to transport reinforcements to the town by train and he inflicted a crushing defeat on greatly superior numbers.

"THREE-QUARTERS OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SENT OVER FROM INDIA HAD EITHER DIED OR FALLEN SICK SINCE ARRIVING"

The British commander, Major General Arthur Aitken, would try to cover up his poor performance on the day, but the numbers did not lie. He had lost 817 men and in his hasty withdrawal (fleeing a foe numbering just 1,000) his men had left behind 16 machine guns, 455 rifles and 600,000 rounds of ammunition. Windfalls like this would keep von Lettow's tiny army supplied throughout the war.

Following the failed British invasion, von Lettow continued to sting the British, mounting raids on the railway in Uganda throughout 1915, while the Indian regiments in British East Africa slowly evaporated in the harsh conditions. Three-quarters of the expeditionary force sent over from India had either died or fallen sick since arriving, and new troops had to be brought in from South Africa before another major offensive could be contemplated. At the same time, Belgian forces entered the fray from the Belgian Congo and von Lettow found himself pressed on two fronts. He was still able to inflict another humiliating defeat on the British, at Salaita Hill, on 12 February 1916.

The South Africans take over

With the change in the make-up of the army, a new commander was needed, and Jan Smuts made his second appearance on the stage. Smuts took charge of British forces and instantly embarked on an ambitious campaign to chase down the elusive von Lettow. The wily German commander, however, refused to be pinned down. A massive advantage in manpower (Smuts had more than 27,000 men at his disposal) could never be brought to bear against von Lettow's tiny but fast-moving army, and the German commander's refusal to stand and fight led to him being nicknamed 'von Lettow-Fallback'.

Smuts was also guilty of bad planning, once ordering a column of mounted men, infantry and artillery to march 250 miles (400km) straight through the tsetse fly belt during the rainy season. A 10,000-strong column had been reduced to 3,000 men fit for duty by the time it reached its destination, and 1,500 horses and mules had died on the march.

Still, pressure on the Germans was building. Working together, the British and Belgians cleared the Germans from Lake Tanganyika. To the south, Portugal entered the war in 1916, although all three of the expeditionary forces sent out from Portugal were ravaged by disease as soon as they arrived, and they achieved almost nothing.

East meets west

The war in East Africa entered a third stage when Britain began to ship in men from its West African colonies. Better suited to the conditions, these battle-hardened troops from the Gold Coast, and later from Nigeria, soon earned the respect of friend and foe alike.

On 15 October 1917, the largest battle of the war in Africa opened when Nigerian troops were pinned down by German forces at Mahiwa. Other British units tried to reach them in a battle that spanned three days and has been dubbed 'the African Gettysburg'. Out of a force of 4,500 men, the British lost 1,500. Von Lettow also lost one-third of his deployed force, 500 men out of 1,500, and seriously depleted his meagre reserves of ammunition.

Neither side could continue to fight battles on this scale and von Lettow spent the remainder of the war simply eluding British forces, until he was finally persuaded to end the struggle on 25 November after learning that the war in Europe was over. His men were the last German soldiers to surrender.

***Right:** Two soldiers of the King's African Rifles stand next to a military vehicle in German East Africa*

***Below:** Troops from the King's African Rifles take up positions in a trench defending the Uganda railway*

Images: Alamy

A BITTER LEGACY

Though fighting was limited in scope and scale, WWI still left its indelible mark on the continent

Africa had already suffered greatly at the hands of European colonists. In German South West Africa, for example, a genocidal campaign (featuring the use of concentration camps) had been waged against the indigenous Herero and Nama peoples between 1904 and 1908, in which as many as 100,000 people died.

The First World War brought more misery. While it is fair to say that the majority of Africans were largely unaffected by the conflict, it had a devastating impact in the areas where there were military campaigns.

On a continent as huge as Africa, it was inevitable that whole regions would be left completely out of the war, to the extent that they might not even have been aware that one was going on. Where Europeans did import the war, however, the results were nearly always damaging and often catastrophic. In terms of direct impact, all European powers made use of local civilians as carriers, lugging their supplies and ammunition around the harsh terrain, and these hard-working men suffered terribly. The campaigns in Togoland and Cameroon were brief, but still resulted in the deaths or invaliding of almost half of the 20,000 native carriers employed.

In German East Africa things were much worse. An estimated one million men were used as carriers, and as many as 90,000 of them died in service. Most of these men were paid only meagre wages and some were not paid at all, making them literal slave labour.

African men were used to carry supplies and equipment, and many thousands of them died in the brutal conditions

The true scale of the death toll will never be known, because the Germans did not keep any official records of the men they employed.

Ironically, many of the young men in the various European colonies were eager to enlist as carriers – low wages were considered better than none at all, and there was also the usual martial spirit that tempted some to enlist in the fighting forces as well. Sadly, many of them believed that after showing a willingness to fight for whichever colonial power was in control of their land, they might be rewarded with more generous treatment after the war. This turned out to be a forlorn hope.

Scorched earth

Von Lettow's fast-moving army also had to live off the land – a huge train of porters carrying equipment would have slowed them down too much. This led to von Lettow cutting a swathe through the colony, leaving famine and often starvation in his wake, an effect exacerbated by his habit of destroying anything he could not take with him to deny its use by the British. This harsh practice was largely unnecessary because the British forces carried their supplies with them and did not customarily live off the land. As a result of this, an estimated 300,000 civilians in German East Africa died as a direct result of the passage of armies through their territory.

The war also exposed the myth of the 'civilising influence' that colonial powers claimed they were bringing to their native subjects. The scale of the war in Europe may have been difficult to grasp at such a distance, but there was plenty of evidence delivered in the limited but often savage fighting within the colonies to make it perfectly clear that Europeans failed to live up to the lofty ideals they espoused.

The futility of the fighting in Africa also needs to be considered. German colonies had no chance of standing up to the aggression of British, French and South African forces, and a more pragmatic approach would have been to simply accept this inevitability. It was widely understood that the climate, terrain and wildlife made Africa a nightmarish place to wage a major war, yet such common sense never quite made its way to the top of the command chain.

Hundreds of thousands of African lives might have been spared had the instincts of the colonists themselves to remain neutral been respected, and this is especially true of the campaigning in German East Africa. Von Lettow did indeed tie down a disproportionate number of British Empire troops in the wild goose chase he initiated, but they were unlikely to ever have seen the Western Front anyway. And in any case, it was a brutal calculation that deemed 300,000 civilian fatalities to be an acceptable price for the 11,000 deaths inflicted upon those British forces.

The mass import of men to the continent may also have been responsible for one final tragedy. Already weakened following years of campaigning, famine and the failure of the rains in 1917, the civilian population was still to face its greatest trial. As von Lettow's men were nearing the end of their campaign, they began to be afflicted by a mysterious and deadly disease which turned out to be Spanish Flu. As in Europe, the Spanish Flu would prove more deadly than the war itself – it killed an estimated two million people in sub-Saharan Africa.

"CLIMATE, TERRAIN AND WILDLIFE MADE AFRICA A NIGHTMARISH PLACE TO WAGE A MAJOR WAR, YET SUCH COMMON SENSE NEVER QUITE MADE ITS WAY TO THE TOP OF THE COMMAND CHAIN"

An African veteran who lost his leg in the fighting ekes out a living as a tailor after the conflict

Images: Alamy, Getty

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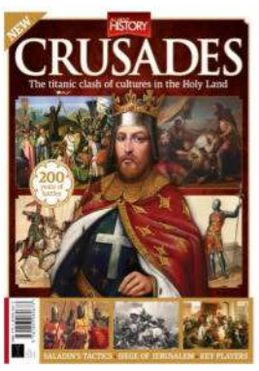

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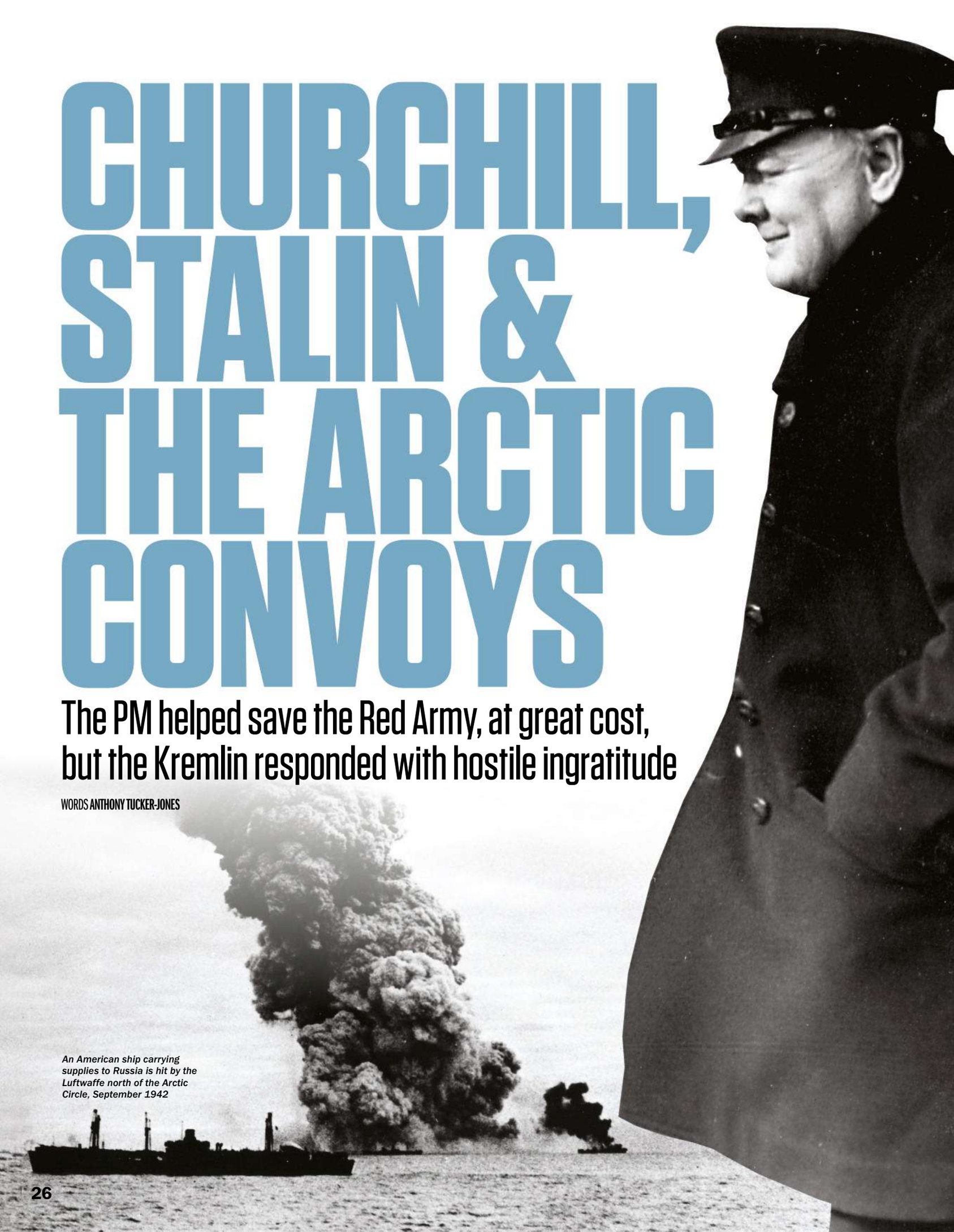
CHURCHILL, STALIN & THE ARCTIC CONVOYS

The PM helped save the Red Army, at great cost, but the Kremlin responded with hostile ingratitude

WORDS **ANTHONY TUCKER-JONES**



An American ship carrying supplies to Russia is hit by the Luftwaffe north of the Arctic Circle, September 1942

The crew of HMS Scylla use steam hoses to clear away ice while on patrol in the North Atlantic, 1943

Winston Churchill was determined to help Joseph Stalin following Adolf Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, no matter the cost and despite their deep ideological differences. This meant that the warships of Admiral John Tovey's Home Fleet were required to escort supply convoys through the Norwegian and Barents Seas to Murmansk and Archangel. Both were within the Arctic Circle and in the case of Archangel it iced up from winter to spring.

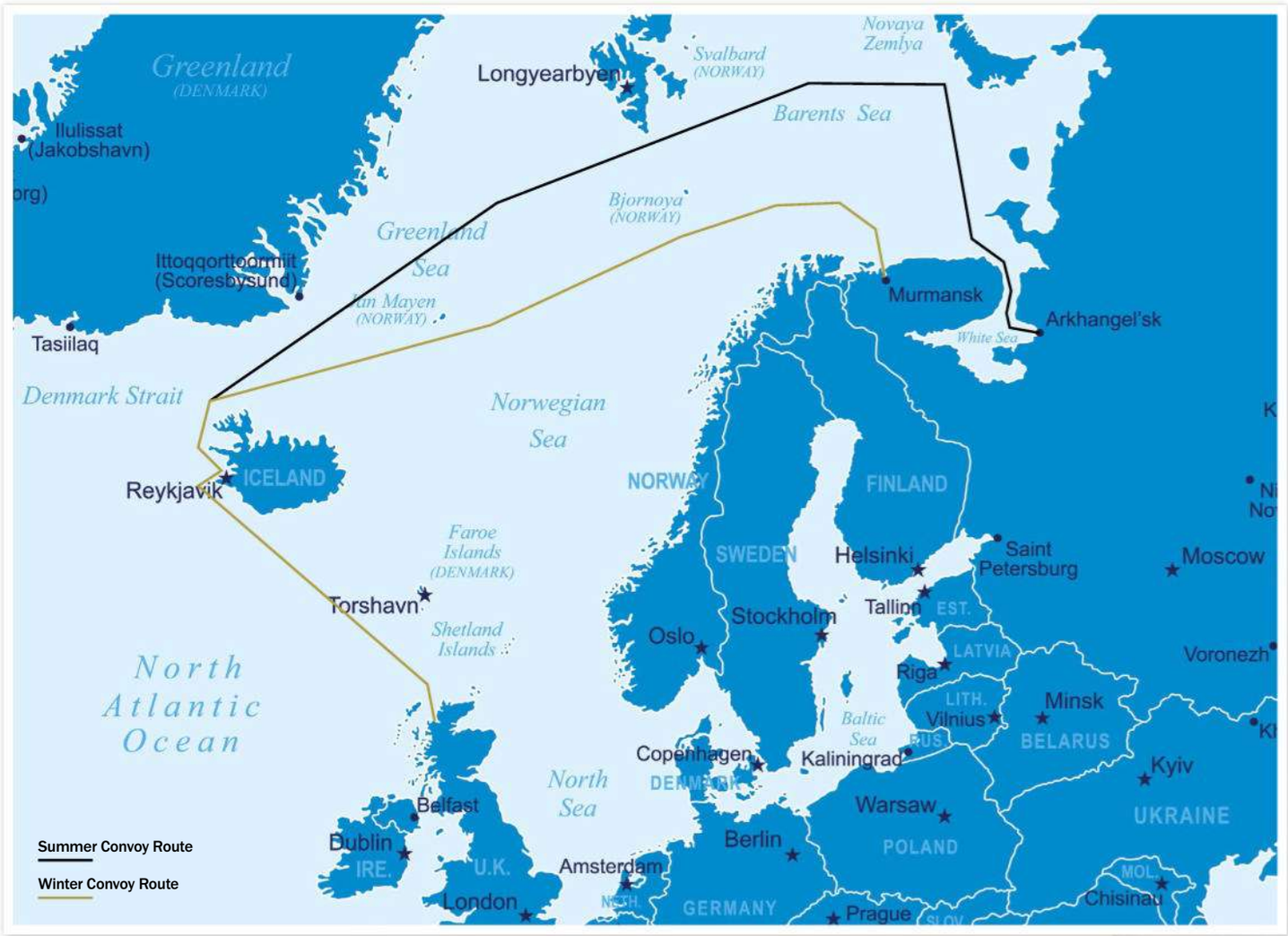
Churchill and US President Franklin D Roosevelt, whose country had not yet entered the war, feared if they did not immediately back the battered Red Army then Stalin might rapidly sue for peace. Not everyone agreed with this. General Alan Brooke, chief of the Imperial Staff, felt that all military equipment should go to the British armed forces, but he was overruled. Churchill and Roosevelt, just three months after Hitler's assault on the Soviet Union, began shipping military supplies via the Arctic. The battle of the Arctic convoys proved a bloody affair as the Germans did everything possible to stop them. These convoys were codenamed PQ – the most infamous being PQ17.

Ship after ship

"I went to Russia on the third convoy to sail from Scotland," recalled correspondent Walter Kerr of the *New York Herald Tribune*. "We left on the night of 13 October [1941], at a time when the German Army was only 65 miles [105km] from Moscow and moving so fast we did not know whether our ships would get to Russia on time." He and the convoy survived unscathed and he travelled on to the Soviet capital. The passage became more hazardous as time passed. Kerr observed: "Our ships that sailed to Russia were inadequately armed… they did not have the fire power they needed to ward off attack, but they also knew how much the supplies were needed by the Red Army. We began to lose ship after ship." It was only the arrival of a US Navy task force at Scapa Flow, after America entered the war, that helped tip the balance. At the end of May 1942 Churchill pushed through the largest Arctic convoy to date, PQ16.

Russian-born British journalist Alexander Werth persuaded the editor of *The Sunday Times* to let him cover the war from Moscow. Once funding was approved he flew to Reykjavik and then prepared for the sea journey to Murmansk – Iceland had been turned into a giant aircraft carrier as part of the war against Hitler's U-boats. Like Kerr, Werth experienced first-hand the desperate attempts to get military supplies to the Soviet Union. He found himself sailing on 20 May 1942 with the 10,000-ton cargo vessel Empire Baffin, which formed part of the 50-strong PQ16 convoy. The Luftwaffe was waiting for them and a week later over 100 bombers attacked southeast of Barents Island. The escort destroyers desperately did everything they could to ward off the raids. However, the bombing caused the loss of four ships and heavily damaged two others. The Luftwaffe struck twice more and just 25 vessels reached Kola Bay on the evening of 30 May. That night they were attacked again, losing another seven ships. Werth survived his baptism of fire to make his way to Moscow.

This was just a taste of things to come, and tragedy occurred in July 1942 with the even bigger convoy PQ17. Under threat of attack it was ordered to scatter and as a result was picked off piecemeal by the merciless U-boats and bombers. The Germans sank 24 ships along with 153 crew and 99,316 tons of supplies, plus 3,350 vehicles, 430 tanks and 210 aircraft. This caused Admiral Tovey to lament: "WC as prime minister is magnificent and unique, but as a strategist and tactician he is liable to be most dangerous." Brooke and Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal were vexed that valuable equipment denied to them was



now at the bottom of the sea. "We kept on supplying tanks and aeroplanes that could ill be spared," grumbled Brooke, "and in doing so suffered the heaviest losses in shipping… We received nothing in return except abuse." Unlike Churchill, neither fully appreciated just how essential it was to keep the Soviet Union in the war.

Not surprisingly Churchill found himself under growing pressure to postpone any further convoys until winter darkness could provide cover. He was against this, knowing full well that Stalin would be furious at any delays. Instead, he suggested to Tovey that he use his heavier warships supported by aircraft carriers to force their way through. The Royal Navy, though, simply could not spare the resources at a time when it was fighting the Battle of the Atlantic and pushing relief convoys through to a beleaguered Malta. Likewise, the US Navy had its hands full in the Pacific. Reluctantly, Churchill acquiesced and signalled Stalin: "It is therefore with the greatest regret that we have reached the conclusion that to attempt to run the next convoy, PQ18, would bring no benefit to you." He then promptly changed his mind when he got Stalin's terse response, which was the usual mix of bullying and moral blackmail. PQ18 took a beating, losing 13 ships.

Diplomatic row

Churchill soon learned that not only was Stalin ungrateful for the supplies, but he also didn't care about the welfare of the merchant sailors who risked their lives to deliver them. The rudimentary hospital at Murmansk was unable to cope with the influx of wounded civilians caused by the Luftwaffe's bombing and frost-bitten seamen coming off the merchant ships. Eventually the Soviet authorities reluctantly gave permission for a British naval hospital at Vaenga, yet Churchill was dismayed in September 1942 when he was informed the Soviets had instructed its staff to pack up and go home. "I hope you will give me some solid reason," wrote Churchill angrily to Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, "which I can give should the matter be raised in Parliament, as it very likely will be." The hospital stayed open.

Aside from Roosevelt and Churchill, Stalin was particularly angry with the US Ambassador Admiral William H Standley. The latter along with the American correspondents in Moscow made it known they felt that the Soviet press and indeed the Soviet government was not showing enough gratitude for the delivery of American and British supplies. Stalin was moved to write to Henry Cassidy of the Associated Press saying rather tartly: "As compared with the aid which the Soviet Union is giving the Allies by drawing upon itself the main forces of the German Fascist armies, the aid of the Allies to the Soviet Union has so far been little effective."

When this letter was published, an affronted Standley flew to Washington to clarify exactly what had been sent and how much of it had been successfully delivered. On his return to Moscow in January 1943 he made it his personal mission to get the Soviets to show some appreciation. No one was forthcoming, not even Molotov. Two months later at a press conference Standley dropped a diplomatic bombshell: he issued a statement saying the Russian people had no idea of the help they were getting and that this would discourage Congress from renewing the aid package.

***Above:** 'Tanks for Russia' week in which all British production went to Stalin*

***Above, right:** A dozen Matilda tanks ready to be shipped to Russia – many ended up on the seabed*

***Below:** Arctic convoys had to brave the perils of constant bomber and U-boat attacks*

Soviet censors were enraged but were authorised by Stalin to issue Standley's statement on 9 March 1943. Stalin appreciated that a public relations war was going on and that for the sake of the bigger picture he needed to give ground. The chief Soviet censor, Comrade Kozhemiako, was furious as his mother had died of starvation in Leningrad. One of his colleagues cursed: "We've lost millions of people and they want us to crawl on our knees because they send us Spam. And has the 'warmhearted' Congress ever done anything that wasn't in its interests? Don't tell me that Lend-Lease is charity." However, no one was going to defy Stalin and the following day the Soviet press began to report warmly on the generous aid sent by their allies.

Churchill's deep regret

Despite the disparaging remarks about Spam, like everything else it played its role in Stalin's war effort. "There were many jokes going around in the army, some of them off-colour, about American Spam," recalled Nikita Khrushchev. "It tasted good nonetheless. Without Spam we wouldn't have been able to feed our army. We had lost our most fertile lands – the Ukraine and the northern Caucasus." What he did not mention was that some of the canned pork was also sent to feed Gulag inmates.

Early in 1943, under cover of the perpetual Arctic darkness, Churchill pushed through two supply convoys, but with the return of the daylight he reluctantly postponed the March convoy. Then under advice from the Royal Navy he agreed that supplies by this route should stop until the return of darkness in the autumn. "This decision was taken with deep regret," he wrote later, "because of the tremendous battles on the Russian front which distinguished the campaign of 1943."

"NOT ONLY WAS STALIN UNGRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPLIES, BUT HE ALSO DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THE WELFARE OF THE MERCHANT SAILORS WHO RISKED THEIR LIVES TO DELIVER THEM"

‘GRAVE FOR SEVEN BROTHERS’

Ironically, Red Army soldiers thought that the ‘USA’ initials stencilled on America-supplied vehicles stood for ‘Ubiyat Sukinsyna Adolfa’ – meaning ‘Kill that son of a whore Adolf’.

The M3 medium tank was armed with a 75mm gun, mounted in the right-hand side of the hull. The small turret with a 37mm gun gave the tank a prominent profile. Soviet tankers named it the ‘Grave for Seven Brothers’ or ‘the crematorium’. Likewise, the Soviets did not like the high silhouette of the M3 light tank either. They also received the M3 Sherman that again was not greatly liked.

German sources indicated they were well aware that Soviet crews did not like the tanks supplied by their allies. Colonel Reinhard Gehlen, in charge of intelligence-gathering on the Eastern Front, noted: “Our intelligence suggested that about 30 armoured brigades had put in an appearance on the Eastern Front equipped with British and American tanks. The Russian troops, however, were not very happy with the quality of these tanks, as they were inferior to the Soviet T-34 in every respect, and with their narrow tracks their cross-country performance in Russia was poor; moreover, their engines could not digest the low-grade fuels common in the USSR.”

“THE RUSSIAN TROOPS, HOWEVER, WERE NOT VERY HAPPY WITH THE QUALITY OF THESE TANKS, AS THEY WERE INFERIOR TO THE SOVIET T-34 IN EVERY RESPECT”

Below: *The Soviets disliked Allied armour as it could not cope with the atrocious Russian winter conditions*

Above: *A destroyed M3 Stuart tank that was being used by Russian forces on the Eastern Front*

An American-supplied Sherman tank alongside a Red Army T-34 in Czechoslovakia at the end of the war

Stalin brooding in the Kremlin was far from happy with his gifts from the British Bulldog and Uncle Sam. They were simply not what he wanted. Sat at his desk he found himself reading a joint communique from Churchill and Roosevelt that caused him great displeasure. Britain and America in 1943 essentially had three options for victory: bring Germany to its knees by bombing its weapons factories, launch a European second front with an invasion of Sicily and Italy, or a cross-Channel invasion of Nazi-occupied France. The reality was that they could only manage the second with the resources available.

Stalin desperately wanted the third option, as only that would draw large numbers of German troops away from the Eastern Front. Looking at his maps, the English Channel seemed such an insignificant barrier. At the end of 1942 he had written to Roosevelt: "Permit me also to express confidence that time has not passed in vain and that the promises about opening the second front in Europe, which were given to me by you, Mr President, and Mr Churchill in relation to 1942, will be fulfilled and will anyway be fulfilled in relation to spring 1943."

After Churchill and Roosevelt's Casablanca conference in early 1943 Stalin continued to lobby them for a firm commitment to a second front. In a joint reply sent on 12 February the pair stated they were "pushing preparations to the limit of our resources for a cross-Channel operation in August… Here again shipping and assault landing craft will be limiting factors. If the operation is delayed by the weather or other reasons it will be prepared with stronger forces in September."

Stalin felt that this was too vague and pressed them to commit to the spring or early summer of 1943 at the latest. Churchill wrote back pointing out the strategic demands on their resources in the Mediterranean, the Far East, the Pacific and the Arctic convoys. Reference to the latter irked Stalin even more. He scoffed: how much time did they need? The slowing down of American and British operations in Tunisia had permitted Hitler to transfer 27 divisions from the West to the Eastern Front. Stalin was thoroughly fed up waiting for them to take the pressure off the Red Army.

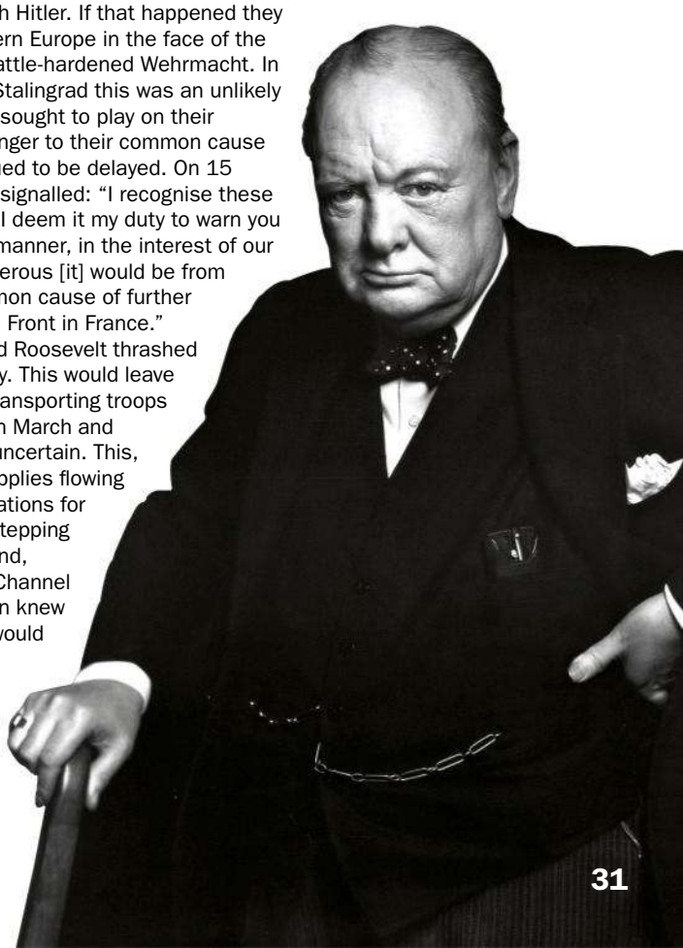
Stalin livid

The Soviet leader was a wily old fox. He appreciated the one thing that Churchill and Roosevelt feared most was not so much the Soviet Union being defeated but making a separate peace deal with Hitler. If that happened they would never liberate western Europe in the face of the redeployed might of the battle-hardened Wehrmacht. In light of Stalin's victory at Stalingrad this was an unlikely outcome, nonetheless he sought to play on their fears by warning of the danger to their common cause if the second front continued to be delayed. On 15 March 1943 he cunningly signalled: "I recognise these difficulties. Nevertheless, I deem it my duty to warn you in the strongest possible manner, in the interest of our common cause, how dangerous [it] would be from the view-point of our common cause of further delay in opening a Second Front in France."

Meanwhile, Churchill and Roosevelt thrashed out how best to attack Italy. This would leave no shipping available for transporting troops and equipment to Britain in March and April, while May was also uncertain. This, plus the needs to keep supplies flowing to North Africa and preparations for an invasion of Sicily as a stepping stone to the Italian mainland, firmly ruled out any cross-Channel attack at all in 1943. Stalin knew this meant the Red Army would be on its own for another year. To further sour relations with Churchill and Roosevelt they had now closed off the Arctic supply route.

***Above:** Stalin was utterly dismissive of the contribution of the Arctic convoys*

***Below:** In 1941 Churchill was determined to support Stalin's battered Red Army regardless of the cost*



Stalin was livid that Churchill was being so difficult. In particular his decision would delay the delivery of 660 fighter aircraft. Stalin wrote to him on 2 April saying: "I consider the step as catastrophic. The Pacific and Southern [ie Iran] routes can't make up for it." Four days later Churchill replied highlighting the achievements of Bomber Command's raids against Germany's cities. He also sought to convince Stalin that the fighters would be sent via the Mediterranean as swiftly as possible.

There was another reason for the halt in the convoys. A diplomatic row broke out over the inadequacy of the air defences at Murmansk, which became the only point of access once Archangel froze. Having run the German gauntlet, the merchantmen found themselves still under attack even after they had reached their destination. Although 60 per cent of the ships were American the British had responsibility for their protection. Lobbying by Churchill failed to have the desired effect. Stalin declined to boost fighter cover over Murmansk and refused to let the RAF help. He wanted Churchill and Roosevelt to concentrate on opening a vital second front in Europe.

Stalin was perhaps understandably affronted that they insist he be grateful for the crumbs from their table. At a meeting with Generals Zhukov and Vasilevsky he had raged: "Tens, hundreds of thousands of Soviet people are giving their lives in the struggle against fascism, and Churchill is haggling over 20 Hurricanes. And their Hurricanes are no good, our pilots don't like that plane."

Kerr, who had covered the battles of Moscow and Stalingrad, appreciated there was a good reason for Soviet stubbornness. He noted: "It was not an incident that astonished American and British observers in Moscow, for during all the months of aid to Russia the Russians consistently refused to allow us to operate on Russian soil. Their stand appeared inexplicable at first, but most of us came to the conclusion that it was simply a manifestation of the years of distrust that followed the revolution. The Russians would win their own war in their own way."

Desperate convoy war

Stalin cared little that the Americans and British were fighting a desperate convoy war in the Atlantic in order to supply their forces in North Africa and as part of the build-up for the second front. Hitler's submarines were now wreaking havoc on the Allies' shipping lanes. During March Admiral Karl Doenitz had over a 100 U-boats at sea and the Allies lost 700,000 tons of shipping that month. However, despite Hitler's best efforts a lot of equipment was still reaching the Soviet Union.

The Luftwaffe issued a secret intelligence report on 4 April 1943 that assessed around 1.2 million tons of supplies had got through via the Arctic route compared to just half-a-million via the Persian Gulf and the Far East.

***Above, left:** Propaganda poster showing the Red Air Force protecting a British convoy arriving at Murmansk*

***Above:** In the foreground is HMS Eskimo, a Royal Navy Tribal Class Destroyer on Arctic convoy duty*

***Below, left:** Another deadly threat faced by the convoys – sea mines designed to rip a ship wide open*

***Below, middle:** Admiral Standley, US Ambassador to Moscow, (centre) very publicly denounced Soviet ingratitude*

***Below, right:** A British-supplied Churchill tank at the Battle of Kursk – very few saw action*

FURTHER READING

- Martin Folly, Geoffrey Roberts & Oleg Rzheshevsky, *Churchill and Stalin: Comrades-in-Arms During the Second World War* (Pen & Sword, 2019)
- Bernard Edwards, *Churchill's Thin Grey Line: British Merchant Ships at War 1939-1945* (Pen & Sword, 2017)
- Bernard Edwards, *The Road to Russia: Arctic Convoys 1942* (Pen & Sword, 2002)

"BY THE END OF THE WAR SOME 22,800 ARMOURED VEHICLES HAD BEEN PROVIDED, OF WHICH 1,981 WERE LOST AT SEA WITH THE ARCTIC CONVOYS"

It reported: "Besides raw materials, victuals and mineral oil, it included 1,880 aircraft, 2,350 tanks, 8,300 lorries, 6,400 other vehicles and 2,250 guns." According to Werth this assessment was remarkably accurate. He noted that American deliveries during 1941-42 amounted to 1.2 million tons and British shipments 532,000 tons.

Kerr in 1943 reckoned that in the first year of deliveries Churchill and Roosevelt supplied Stalin with 4,084 tanks, 3,052 planes, 30,031 vehicles and 831,000 tons of miscellaneous goods. Regardless of all the sacrifice to get it there the Red Army found much of what it received was obsolete. Over half the tanks delivered in 1942 were thinly armoured and insufficiently armed light tanks. The following year the proportion rose to 70 percent. Even the heavy tanks such as the British Matilda were found wanting and "as inflammable as a box of matches".

It was evident to Werth from his contacts in Moscow that it was Uncle Sam's gifts that were going to have the biggest impact on the impeding fighting at Kursk in the summer of 1943. He wrote: "On 11 June I recorded a conversation with a Russian correspondent who had just been to Kursk. He said the Russian equipment there was truly stupendous; he had never seen anything like it. What was also going to make a big difference this summer was the enormous number of American trucks."

Incredible generosity

Armoured vehicles supplied by America, Britain and Canada represented a sizable chunk of the Red Army's tank forces. By the end of the war some 22,800 armoured vehicles had been provided, of which 1,981 were lost at sea with the Arctic convoys. These deliveries represented about 16 percent of Soviet tank production, 12 percent of self-propelled guns and all armoured personnel carrier production. The first shipment in 1941 totalled 487 British Matilda, Valentine and Tetrarch tanks and 182 American M3A1 light tanks and M3 Lee medium tanks. The following year these shipments had increased to 2,497 from Britain and 3,023 from America. Yet Stalin still remained unmoved by such incredible generosity.

Just 300 British Churchill infantry tanks were sent to the Soviet Union with the Arctic convoys. Forty-three were lost at sea and no further examples were sent after 1943. Although Soviet tankers liked the tank's thick armour they did not think much of its puny six-pounder gun or its speed. The 5th Guards Tank Army deployed to Kursk had just 35 of them available. The Valentine tank became the most common British type in service with the Red Army, followed by the Matilda. The Valentine proved popular in Soviet service due to its mobility. However, the Matilda, Valentine and Bren Gun Carrier all had narrow tracks which restricted mobility in the winter. They tended to clog with snow and then freeze solid.

Although the Red Army viewed the Lend-Lease vehicles as a blessing and a curse in equal measure, there was no getting away from them. By 1943 around 20 percent of Stalin's tank brigades had Lend-Lease vehicles, while 10 percent were completely equipped with them. What was of greatest value to the Red Army were undoubtedly the trucks and lorries which significantly enhanced its mobility. Werth noted: "From my personal observation I can say that, from 1943 on, the Red Army unquestionably appreciated the help from the West – whether in the form of Airacobras, Kittyhawks, Dodges, jeeps, Spam, army boots, or medicines. The motor vehicles were particularly admired and valued."

Few of the American- or British-supplied fighters were to see action at Kursk. The Red Air Force units operating on the central part of the front employed almost no Hurricanes, Kittyhawks or Tomahawks as they had failed to live up to expectations. However, at least one unit flew the P-39 Airacobra fighter in a ground-attack role. In addition some of the air armies that were committed operated the American Douglas Boston attack bomber.

Much to Churchill's displeasure, Stalin was never grateful for the heroic sacrifices made by the Arctic convoys. Only much later after the war did Khrushchev finally acknowledge: "The English helped us tenaciously and at great peril to themselves."

Images: Alamy, Getty, Anthony Tucker-Jones

CHAERONEA, GREECE, 3 AUGUST 338 BCE

CHAERONEA 338 BCE

Macedon, led by King Philip II, had come to dominate most of Greece and only an unlikely alliance of Athens and Thebes stood in his way

WORDS **MURRAY DAHM**

The Macedonian phalanx was a highly effective new infantry formation that was introduced by Philip II

The Battle of Chaeronea was one of the most decisive in the ancient world. It decided the fate of Greece – would it come under Macedonian domination or remain free? The future of Greece rested on two of its hitherto greatest military powers: Athens and Thebes. The other great hoplite power, Sparta, had been humbled by Thebes 25 years earlier. The result of Chaeronea was, however, to be a crushing victory for Macedonia which kept all of Greece compliant to Macedonian will for the next 15 years – this in turn allowed Alexander to embark on his unprecedented conquest of the Persian Empire in 334 BCE. The history of the ancient world (and subsequent centuries) would have been very different had the result of the Battle of Chaeronea been an Athenian and Theban victory.

The details of the battle (as much as we can recover them) deserve to be far better known. For such an important engagement we, frustratingly, do not have much surviving source material on it; our best sources for the period are lost and we are left with only summaries and anecdotes. What is more, the historians of Alexander, of which there are many, tend to rush over Chaeronea because of the greatness Alexander achieved after it – the biographer Plutarch, for instance, has only a single sentence on Alexander's role at Chaeronea. But all that was to come for Alexander began at Chaeronea – he learned all he needed to know of warfare at this battle.

Even though he was only 18, he commanded the cavalry; he had, however, fought in his first military campaign at 16.

Philip probably never expected to become the king of Macedonia because he had two older brothers – Alexander II and Perdiccas III – who were both kings before him. What is more, Philip seems to have been traded as a hostage to guarantee peace, first to the Illyrians and then to the Thebans. There he would observe and learn all about the greatest military threats to Macedon. At the court of Bardylis, the Illyrian king, Philip probably witnessed the cavalry and combined arms tactics of the Illyrians (the use of cavalry and light-armed troops). In the Thebes of Epaminondas and Pelopidas, whose revolutionary reforms of warfare came to dominate hoplite warfare, he probably observed the deepening of the hoplite line and the lengthening of the spear. These would all be changes Philip embraced and brought into effect as soon as he unexpectedly ascended the throne – with an eye to defeating both styles of warfare. When Perdiccas III was killed in battle with the Illyrians in 359 BCE, Philip left Thebes (perhaps escaping) and became king.

According to the historian Diodorus of Sicily, Philip immediately set about reforming the Macedonian army – bringing together the Macedonians in a series of assemblies, equipping and organising them. He then held "constant manoeuvres" of his new invention: the Macedonian phalanx. This infantry formation saw six divisions (called taxeis,

***Above:** The battle was a pivotal moment in the history of the ancient world that echoed down the centuries*

OPPOSING FORCES

MACEDONIAN	VS	ATHENIAN, THEBAN AND ALLIES
LEADERS Philip II of Macedon, Alexander		**LEADERS** Lysicles, Stratocles Chares Theagenes
INFANTRY 30,000 (9,000 men of the phalanx, c.3,000 men in the hypaspist bodyguard)		**INFANTRY** 30,000 (15,000 allied, 7,500 Athenian, 7,500 Theban)
CAVALRY 2,000		**CAVALRY** 4,000 (2,000 allied, 1,000 Athenian, 1,000 Theban)

The Lion of Chaeronea, made after the battle as the monument to the Theban Sacred band, 254 of whom were buried under it

singular taxis), each of 1,500 men – and each one drawn from a different region of Macedon – some 9,000 men in total. These would be drawn up 16 ranks deep and armed with a long spear – the sarissa. These were between 15-24ft (4.5-7.3m) in length (our sources differ), and on average 18ft (5.5m) long. In contrast, older hoplite spears, called dory, were only 8ft (2.5m) long. In addition to the length of the sarissa and line depth, the Macedonian phalanx could achieve remarkable flexibility and close order – called synaspismos – where each man occupied only 18in (45cm) of space. This was half the space of a usual hoplite unit where each man occupied 35in (90cm). As such, this new formation had more penetrative power and brought more spearpoints to bear on a single spot on the enemy line. The challenge was that the phalanx was not as wide as other formations – the usual hoplite line depth was between eight and 12 ranks (although it had been getting deeper). As such, the flanks of the phalanx needed protecting – usually done by other infantry (light-armed or hoplites) or cavalry. If its flanks were effectively protected, however, it would come to dominate the battlefields of the eastern Mediterranean and into Persia for the next 150 years.

In addition to the phalanx, Philip made good use of Macedonian cavalry and light-armed troops, either mercenaries or those from allied kingdoms. This army was designed to defeat, initially, the cavalry armies of the Illyrians who threatened Macedonia from the north, and hoplite armies who threatened it from the south. Chaeronea would

***Right:** A terracotta depiction of a Greek hoplite and Persian warrior exchanging blows*

***Left:** Funeral stele of a Macedonian warrior, c.350 BCE, from Pella. It dates perhaps to the early years of Philip's reforms to create the phalanx*

CHAERONEA 338 BCE

01 MACEDONIAN DEPLOYMENT

Philip draws up his army, placing himself with infantry bodyguards (the later hypaspists) on the right, with half the phalanx. Alexander, in command of the left wing, has the other half of the phalanx and the Macedonian cavalry forces.

02 ATHENIAN AND THEBAN DEPLOYMENT

The Athenians draw up on the left of their line, facing Philip. Next to them and in echelon, the Boeotians draw up. Beyond them on the right, also drawn up in echelon are the remaining allies: Euboeans, Achaeans, Corinthians, Thebans, Megarians, Leucadians and Corcyraeans – yet these take no part in the ensuing battle.

03 OPENING MOVES

The Athenians advance. Philip withdraws with his troops up the slopes of Mount Thurion.

04 MACEDONIAN LEFT

Alexander, commanding the left half of the Macedonian phalanx, keeps his men in contact with the withdrawing right wing of the Macedonian infantry.

05 CHARGING THE ATHENAINS

In the Athenian advance the Thebans try to stay in contact with them but their line becomes stretched and weakened. Simultaneously, Alexander, leading his half of the phalanx and the Macedonian cavalry charges at this gap and breaks through, causing panic. At the same time, Philip halts his withdrawal and charges downhill into the pursuing Athenians, who are pushed back and routed.

Macedonian
Athenian and Theban

08 HONOURING THE DEAD

At the conclusion of the battle, the dead of the Theban Sacred Band are gathered up and moved to the site of the Lion. The Macedonian dead are also gathered and interred in a tumulus which perhaps marks the extent of the Macedonian pursuit.

07 THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SACRED BAND

As the rout continues, the 300 men of the Theban Sacred Band, who alone stood their ground when Alexander charged, are destroyed to a man.

06 A BLOODY ROUT

The allied army flees. The allies who have not engaged manage to escape but the Thebans and Athenians are cut down – the Athenians suffering 1,000 dead and 2,000 captured. The Theban casualties are similar.

"THE 300 MEN OF THE THEBAN SACRED BAND, WHO ALONE STOOD THEIR GROUND WHEN ALEXANDER CHARGED, ARE DESTROYED TO A MAN"

Map illustration: Rocío Espín Piñar

be the new army's greatest success (of course Alexander would take it and conquer most of the known world – but those accomplishments were in the future in 338 BCE).

The first test of Philip's new phalanx was at the Battle of Methonê, near the modern village of Nea Agathoupolis in Pieria, in 359/358 BCE, where he faced a rival claimant to the Macedonian throne named Argaeus, who was backed by Athens. Details are slight, but it was a complete victory – Athens would remain a threat until defeated at Chaeronea. Philip then went on to defeat enemies in Paeonia, Illyria and Thrace, and then pressed south, taking up a more and more dominant position in Greek politics.

In 356 BCE Philip took command in the Third Sacred War and used a religious pretext to further expand his influence. This was also the year in which Alexander was born to the fourth wife of the polygamous Philip, Olympias. Philip continued to expand his influence and occasionally war against rebellious conquered territories. By the time Alexander was 16, Philip had expanded Macedonian influence as far as the Dardanelles and the site of modern Istanbul, but some cities in Greece still resisted. Most notably, Thebes and Athens. They, however, had been implacable enemies to each other at times throughout the fourth century BCE – seeing each other as rivals rather than allies. It was only the threat of Philip which united them, and that was an unexpected and last-minute alliance – it would prove to be an unmitigated disaster for both cities.

By 338 BCE, Philip had secured his northern and eastern ambitions and turned his attentions southwards once more. This was not unexpected, but, as so often in the relations between Greek cities, they had descended into petty squabbling rather than uniting to face an expected assault. That Athens agreed to an alliance with Thebes and Boeotia to oppose the Macedonian threat was an unexpected turn (there was a party in Athens which remained vehemently anti-Theban). Most of our sources concentrate on the contribution of Athens and Thebes and do not mention any other allied cities but there do seem to have been several – some sources mention Euboeans, Achaeans, Corinthians, Megarians, Leucadians and Corcyraeans – others just mention 'allies'. Yet they would play little part in the battle so their omission is, perhaps, understandable.

"PHILIP THEN WENT ON TO DEFEAT ENEMIES IN PAEONIA, ILLYRIA AND THRACE, AND THEN PRESSED SOUTH, TAKING UP A MORE AND MORE DOMINANT POSITION IN GREEK POLITICS"

The allies agreed to block Philip's advance southwards at Chaeronea, in the valley of the Cephisus River and in Boeotian territory. Philip advanced south and met the allied army blocking his path. There are many unknowns about the battle and the precise site of the battlefield is still a controversy; what we do seem to know of it from literary sources does not marry with the site usually identified.

This is complicated because we have two funerary mounds – the Lion of Chaeronea to the dead members of the Theban Sacred Band to the southeast of the town and, even further east, a tumulus to the Macedonian dead. Most scholars have used these two monuments to site the battlefield. However, it is clear that the bodies of the dead were moved to these two sites. The literary accounts, especially a valuable anecdote in Polyaenus of Macedon, tells that at the start of the battle Philip withdrew his army up a hill. There is no hill where he could have done this on a battle site placed to the east of the town. There is, however, a hill that suits such a manoeuvre to the west of the town, Mount Thurion. Therefore we chose to place the battle there, for reasons which will become clear.

For the Battle of Chaeronea, we get none of the detailed deployment which we get for the subsequent battles of Alexander in sources such as Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius Rufus and even in Diodorus himself. We can use those later deployments to our advantage, however, as Macedonian deployment remained

Epaminondas, the famed Theban general, was a former leader of the Sacred Band and a tutor to Philip during his time in Thebes

***Below:** The Macedonian phalanx formation made deadly use of long spears*

remarkably similar. And having learned so many lessons evident at Chaeronea, why would Alexander deviate from what had happened there? Especially when his subsequent battles also brought him so much success. The usual Macedonian deployment was that the centre of the Macedonian line was occupied by the six taxeis of the phalanx, each with its 1,500 men, 9,000 men in total. Each was led by an experienced commander. To the right of the phalanx came the hypaspists, a double-strength taxis of 3,000 men. We are not given the name hypaspists at Chaeronea but we are told that Philip was on the right of the phalanx with his bodyguards – and this later unit is probably the one meant although it may have had slightly fewer men. In Alexander's later battles the Companion Cavalry were stationed on the right of the hypaspists, led by Alexander himself. At Chaeronea, however, he was stationed to the left of the phalanx but he did have the cavalry there with him. Other Macedonian allies, infantry and cavalry – especially the Thessalians – were also stationed on the left (as in Alexander's subsequent battles). We have none of this detail for Chaeronea. We are only told that Philip had 30,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry and that the armies deployed at dawn. We can, nonetheless, use the later deployments to give us the detail of what was likely at Chaeronea. The men of the later phalanx and hypaspists would account for almost 12,000 of the 30,000 infantry.

In terms of cavalry, Alexander later had eight squadrons or ilai (singular ile) of 200-300 men, 1,600 men in total. Similar (or slightly smaller numbers) may have been deployed at Chaeronea. In his invasion of Illyria in 359/8 BCE we are told that Philip had no less than 10,000 infantry and 600 cavalry. The subsequent successes of Philip must have seen expansion of these numbers. The additional cavalry (up to 2,000) may have been made up of Thessalians.

On the Athenian and Theban/Boeotian side we must also use what we know of these armies from elsewhere. We are only told that more than 1,000 Athenians fell and 2,000 were captured; we are not given a specific number for the Boeotians, only that their casualties were similar. Diodorus only includes Athenians and Thebans/Boeotians at the battle opposing the Macedonians and only hints at other allies. The Athenian orator Demosthenes, however, gives us a list of allies he had gathered – Euboeans, Achaeans, Corinthians, Thebans, Megarians, Leucadians and Corcyraeans. These allies provided 15,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry. The geographer Strabo also mentions the Corinthians as allies. We might be able to suggest that the other allies provided these numbers but that the Athenians and Thebans/Boeotians provided more men – perhaps 7,500 infantry and 1,000 cavalry each. This would bring their army up to the size of the Macedonians, and perhaps one of the reasons for the alliance was to achieve this. The allies right flank rested on the River Cephisus. Other Athenian and Theban armies of the time (where we can tell) had similar numbers so it is not unreasonable to accept these numbers – it also makes the losses to

***Below:** After his victory, Philip controversially built the Philippeion at Olympia to commemorate his victory over fellow Greeks*

***Above:** A Macedonian solider (not a phalangite) from the tomb of King Philip at Vergina, Greece, c.336 BCE*

Athens and Thebes approximately 40 percent of their total numbers – a devastating defeat for both cities.

We are told that, on the Macedonian side, Philip commanded one wing and Alexander the other; Philip the right, Alexander the left. This matches later battles – it also implies that half of the phalanx was included in the right wing, the other half in the left (again, as it did later). Opposing them, the Athenians faced Philip, the Thebans next to them.

As had become standard in Theban battles, it seems the allies were drawn up in echelon, each division slightly behind that to their left. This had allowed the Thebans to concentrate their power in one spot (on the left where they had won their greatest victories) and, what is more, to concentrate their attacks on the enemy commander, usually on the enemy right – precisely where Philip was positioned. It also meant they could fight a battle with their best troops and keep less reliable troops away.

Since the allies seem not to have become involved in the fighting at Chaeronea, this all suggests an echelon battle order. It was probably a concession to Athens to allow them to be on the extreme left of the battle line – the spot usually taken by the Thebans. What's more, the battle was being fought in their territory, another reason they might have taken up such a position.

We are not definitively given the names of the commanders of the Athenian and Theban/Boeotian armies, but we know Theagenes commanded the Sacred Band and was therefore, presumably, the overall commander of the Theban forces. On the Athenian side, there were usually several generals, up to ten (strategoi, singular strategos). Only three are named – Lysicles, Stratocles and Chares. Lysicles was later blamed for the defeat and put to death. Stratocles and Chares fled for their lives.

"WE CAN SEE PHILIP'S WITHDRAWAL NOT ONLY AS A WAY OF PROLONGING THE BATTLE AND EXHAUSTING THE ATHENIANS BUT OF ALSO DELIBERATELY WEAKENING THE ALLIED LINE"

The historian Justin tells us that the Athenians outnumbered the Macedonians opposite them – the men with Philip. If the Athenians had 7,500 men this would outnumber Philip's half of the phalanx. It may also suggest either that he had fewer than 3,000 bodyguards or that the Athenians had more men; if they had the most men, ceding the position on the left to them is even more understandable. The greater line depth of the Macedonians would also mean they had a much narrower frontage than the men opposing them.

The battle began soon after dawn with the Athenians charging the Macedonians opposite them. Here, however, is where the detail of the engagement seems to really let us down – but all is not lost. According to Polyaenus of Macedon, after he had drawn up his line, Philip yielded and gave way, withdrawing up some high ground but keeping his phalanx together in close order. Their shields protected them from Athenian attacks. After withdrawing up the high ground, Philip halted his men then turned them to attack and routed the Athenians who had thought up to that moment that they were winning. According to the tradition, Philip is credited with the pithy observation: "The Athenians do not understand how to win." However, this anecdote is usually ignored in accounts of the battle since it does not fit with ideas about the site on which it was fought. But it does make sense of what else we know. Another anecdote

***Below:** During the battle Philip II would have worn an iron breastplate with gold decorations*

***Above, top:** A paired ivory portrait bust of Alexander, Philip's successor and commander of cavalry*

***Above:** A contemporary ivory portrait bust of Philip II from his tomb at Vergina, made only two years after Chaeronea*

***Above:** Detail of the funerary monument (a loutrophoros) to Panchares – an Athenian killed by a Macedonian cavalryman at Chaeronea*

tells us that Philip knew the Athenians were passionate but in poor physical condition and inexperienced in contrast to his own men, and so he deliberately prolonged the contest and therefore made the Athenians easier to defeat. This idea is repeated in other sources.

Many of our sources, however, concentrate on the conduct of Alexander at the battle because he would become Alexander the Great. These can be used in conjunction with the (oft-ignored) anecdotes above. Used together, we gain a reasonably full picture of the battle. According to Diodorus, who has nothing of Philip's withdrawal or use of high ground, Alexander faced the Thebans. The battle was hotly contested for a long time and many fell on both sides (almost useless detail – but it can be seen to correspond to Philip's withdrawal and deliberate prolonging of the fight). Then Alexander charged his cavalry at the enemy formation and was the first to break through the line. We are also told that gaps opened up in the Theban front line. Only then did Philip advance.

We may ask what caused Alexander to charge all of a sudden and we can observe that cavalry did not usually charge undisrupted heavy infantry formations – to do so usually spelled disaster. Finally, what were the gaps and what caused them? The answers to these questions come in Polyaenus' anecdote. As the Athenians advanced, the Thebans were forced to keep their left flank in touch with the right flank of the advancing Athenians (not helped if that advance was impetuous). So too was the left portion of the Macedonian phalanx required to keep in touch with the withdrawing part on the right; this, however, was one of the aspects of Philip's reforms – the Macedonian phalanx was designed to be easily able to adapt to such a battlefield situation.

We can therefore see Philip's withdrawal not only as a way of prolonging the battle and exhausting the Athenians but of also deliberately weakening the allied line – causing gaps to occur where the Thebans struggled to stay in formation and in touch with the advancing Athenians. If Alexander charged into those gaps, that may have been the signal to Philip to halt his withdrawal and then counter-charge, downhill, towards the Athenians, catching them by surprise and, with a disrupted enemy line, ensure the defeat of the Athenians and Thebans. The other allies, seeing this, then fled from the battlefield having never come into contact with the enemy.

In all of Alexander's subsequent battles against the Persians (especially Granicus (334 BCE), Issus (333 BCE) and Gaugamela (331 BCE)), he would enact battlefield tactics to create gaps in the enemy line and then exploit those gaps and charge into them with his cavalry. There is every reason to accept that he did the same at Chaeronea too.

When Alexander broke through the enemy line, the Thebans, soon followed by the remainder of the allied army, gave way and fled. The actions of Philip are painted as competing with Alexander for the glory of the victory, but it seems clear that both of them combined in a deliberate plan to defeat the Athenians and Thebans.

The elite unit of the Theban army, the Sacred Band, has a special part to play in the history of the battle. Consisting of 300 elite hoplites equipped and housed at state expense and highly trained, they died to a man facing Alexander. Shown where they fell, Philip is said to have wept at such a loss of brave men. The Lion was later erected over them as a funerary monument – when excavated it revealed 254 skeletons. The bodies were, however, moved into that position. So too were the Macedonian dead moved to the site of the tumulus raised over them, perhaps the extent of Macedonian pursuit. The placement of the Lion and tumulus probably played no part in the topography of the battle but have been consistently used to do so, much to the detriment of our understanding what happened on that fateful day in early August 338 BCE, when the Macedonian domination of all of Greece was assured.

FURTHER READING

- Alfred S Bradford, Philip II of Macedon: *A Life from the Ancient Sources*, (Praeger, 1992)
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Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Art / Giovanni Dall'Orto

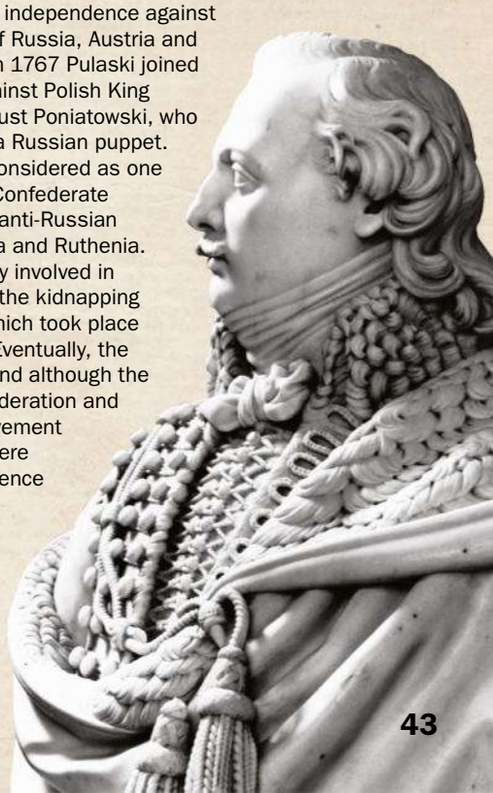
This painting of Pulaski is on display at the Savannah Visitor Center in Georgia

AMERICA'S CAVALRY COUNT

Casimir Pulaski was a hero of both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the fledgling USA during the War of Independence. His contribution to the Continental Army's campaign has seen him dubbed 'the father of American cavalry'

WORDS MAREK SOBIERALSKI

Casimir Pułaski was born in Warsaw on 4 March 1745 and grew up steeped in Poland's cavalry tradition. The Commonwealth was struggling to maintain its independence against the influence of Russia, Austria and Prussia, and in 1767 Pulaski joined a rebellion against Polish King Stanisław August Poniatowski, who was seen as a Russian puppet. Pulaski was considered as one of the leading Confederate leaders, and incited anti-Russian uprisings in Lithuania and Ruthenia. He was also allegedly involved in the preparations for the kidnapping of the Polish king, which took place in November 1771. Eventually, the king was released, and although the leaders of the Confederation and Pulaski denied involvement in the kidnapping, there was substantial evidence against them.



***Right:** Born in Warsaw in 1745, Pulaski is best remembered for his role in a conflict on the other side of the world that changed the course of history*

The Confederation collapsed in 1772, and Pulaski was forced to leave the country due the accusations against him. He was sentenced to death in absentia for an attempted regicide in 1773, and wandered around Europe for several years, staying in Dresden, France and Turkey. Pulaski was restless and frustrated that he could not find an army in which to enlist. According to the American Battlefield Trust, the French army refused to allow an accused regicide to join its ranks. He met Benjamin Franklin in Paris, who was aware of Pulaski's military reputation, and convinced him to cross the ocean and join George Washington's Continental Army in the fight against the British. In a letter to Washington dated 29 May 1777 Franklin wrote: "Count Pulaski of Poland, an officer famed throughout Europe for his bravery in defence of the liberty of his country against the overwhelming forces of Russia, Austria and Prussia, may be highly useful in our service."

This apparently caused some relief in France, as French officials had also encouraged Franklin to send Pulaski to America, if only to remove a potential agitator. He arrived in Massachusetts in July 1777 and immediately wrote to Washington asking for a commission in the army. He stated in his letter: "I came here where freedom is being defended to serve it, and to live or die for it." Washington was impressed with Pulaski's military reputation and horsemanship but was unable to immediately give him a commission, as that required an act of the Continental Congress. In the meantime, he joined Washington at the Battle of Brandywine Creek in September 1777.

The Continental Army fought well at Brandywine but was eventually outflanked by the British and forced to retreat, and this was the moment that Pulaski first showed his worth. While reconnoitring with some of Washington's bodyguards he saw that the British were engaging in a flanking manoeuvre that would cut off the Continental Army's retreat. As noted by the American Battlefield Trust: "As the British forced the Americans off the field on the 11th of September Washington realised to his horror that

Opposite, left to right: *Sergeant Jasper raises the South Carolina flag on Spring Hill Redoubt in Savannah, 9 October 1779*

The Continental Army fought well at the Battle of Brandywine Creek in September 1777, but was forced to retreat

George Washington (far left) was impressed with Pulaski's military reputation and excellent horsemanship skills

Below: *The Continental Army fought desperately to hold its ground at the Battle of Brandywine Creek*

Below: *King Stanislaw August Poniatowski*

DEFENDING POLISH INDEPENDENCE

Pulaski played a key role in standing up to Russian interference

Pulaski was one of the main commanders of the Bar Confederation – an association of Polish nobles formed to defend the independence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth against Russian political influence. It was an armed group, established at Bar in Podolia in February 1768 with the swearing of the founding act in defence of the Catholic faith and the independence of the Republic of Poland. It was directed against the protectorate of the Russian Empire, King Stanisław August Poniatowski and the Russian troops supporting him. The confederation's aim was to abolish laws imposed by Russia and is considered by some historians as the first Polish national uprising.

The Polish king had been imposed by Russia, under the 'guardianship' of Catherine II. The king initiated political changes that broke with the previous system of noble democracy. The project of granting political rights to dissenters living in the Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, supported by Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia, was particularly controversial.

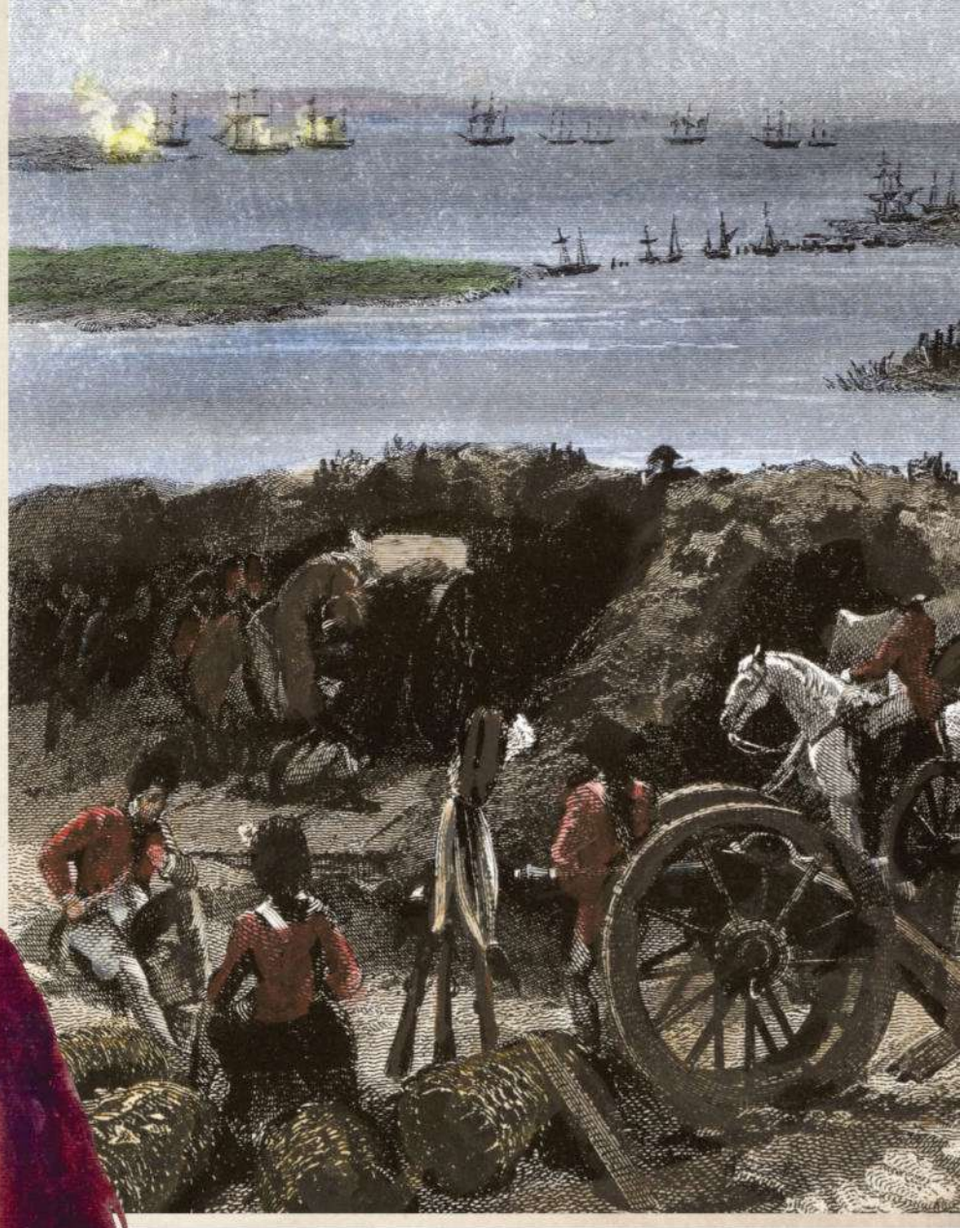
In 1767, 20,000 Russian troops entered the borders of the Commonwealth, under the protection of which Russian envoy Nikolai Repnin established 'confederations of different faiths'. In response to these events, the Catholic nobility established the Radom Confederation against Poniatowski, which Repnin himself quickly gained influence over. He skilfully directed it against the king, which put Poniatowski in check and forced him to fulfil the will of the Russian Tsarina.

BATTLE
BRANDYWINE

the right flank of his army was about to collapse, potentially causing a general rout, and destroying his army. In a flash, Pulaski volunteered to counterattack the British and give the Continentals time to withdraw in good order."

Pulaski was described as a war-like presence come up out of the solid earth: "With no time to argue Washington entrusted Pulaski with his own mounted guard about 30 in number and watched as the Polish volunteer led his band directly into the fray. Pulaski dashed out to the right over the broken fences and there stood a while upright in his stirrups, reconnoitring while the enemy, who appeared by the smoke and the dust that rolled before them in the wind, to be much nearer than they really were, redoubled their efforts. But at last Pulaski saw a favourable opportunity.

"WASHINGTON DID NOT MUCH VALUE CAVALRY. HE AND MOST OF HIS GENERALS FAILED TO GRASP THE POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENESS OF A COHESIVE, HIGHLY TRAINED CAVALRY UNIT"



HEROIC OUTSIDERS

Pulaski wasn't the only Pole to fight in the US

Casimir Pulaski, in contrast to his renowned fellow Polish volunteer Tadeusz Kosciuszko, was not a leading thinker and faced considerable disfavour from many of his contemporaries.

Kosciuszko was a military engineer and supreme commander of the National Armed Forces during the Kosciuszko Uprising of 1794, and lieutenant general of the army of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He was then brevet brigadier general of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. He had travelled to the United States in 1776, and was nominated as an engineer in the Continental Army, initially tasked with developing Philadelphia's fortifications. He was then sent north to the Canadian border under General Horatio Gates, where he fortified various military camps. He became famous for his fortification work that contributed to the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga. In recognition of his engineering skills, he was entrusted with building the strong fortress of West Point on the Hudson River.

Nevertheless, Pulaski's significance transcended criticism after the war, as he emerged as a prominent symbol of both American and Polish independence owing to his remarkable battlefield courage displayed in Europe and North America, as well as his subsequent sacrifice. In 2009, the United States Senate bestowed upon him honorary US citizenship, a distinction extended to only eight individuals in history. In the annals of military history, he is celebrated to this day as 'The Father of the American Cavalry'.

***Left:** Pulaski was given honorary US citizenship in 2009 in recognition of his contribution to American independence*

***Above:** The Siege of Charleston ended on 12 May 1780 with the defeat of the 5,000-strong American defending force*

***Left:** Pulaski's coat of arms during the American Revolutionary War*

"The column wheeled as the wind swept across their van, revealing them like a battalion of spirits breathing fire and smoke. He gave the signal. In three minutes, we were ready for the word."

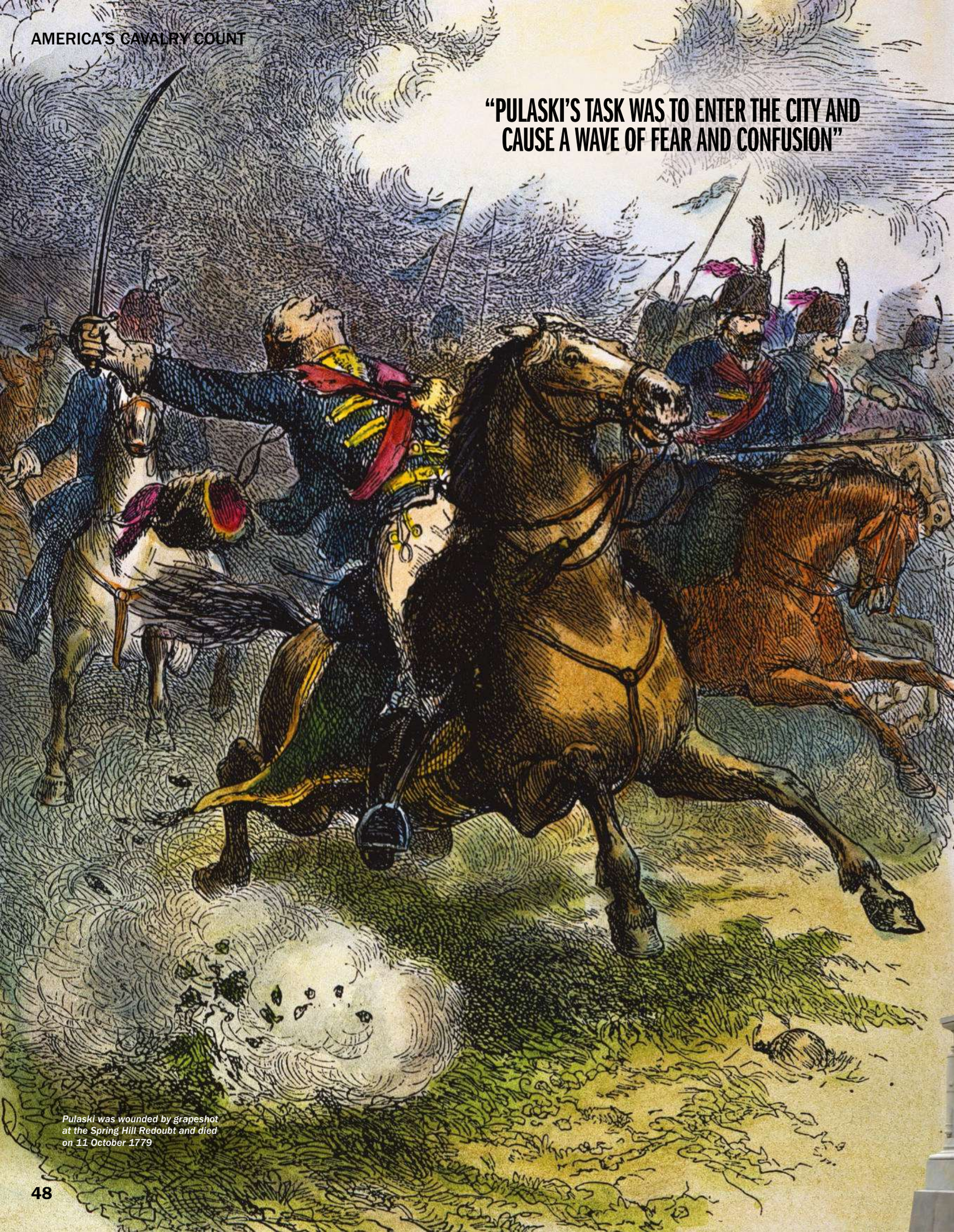
The importance of the well-timed charge was significant, as it averted a disaster by delaying the British long enough for the Continentals to retreat. It possibly saved Washington's life, as there was a very good chance that the British could have captured most of the Continental Army, including Washington himself. Pulaski's charge had demonstrated that the Americans were in desperate need of an experienced cavalry commander, which it would now have. Congress immediately commissioned Pulaski as brigadier general and honorific commander of the horse.

Washington did not much value cavalry, and he and most of his generals failed to grasp the potential effectiveness of a cohesive, highly trained cavalry unit. As such, when Pulaski arrived in America the Continental Army didn't really have mounted units, just a small number of mountain troops that were dispersed throughout the army, with little discipline or training. In addition, there was no doctrine of how to use them effectively in battle. Now, speaking little English, he faced the difficult task of combining four semi-independent commands of Continental dragoons. Pulaski became frustrated with the American command's refusal to embrace the value of a division-level force of trained cavalry, as well as a lack of funding from Congress. He considered returning to France, but instead resigned as commander of the horse and asked permission to form a mixed cavalry and infantry unit, which would become known as Pulaski's Legion and have some autonomy in fighting the British. Despite problems with funding, supplies and recruitment, the unit was ready by mid-1778.

Pulaski brought organisation and proper training to the Continentals, and his Legion became the training ground for American cavalry officers. It is widely regarded that he essentially 'wrote the book' on how the American army trained and used cavalry in combat. Using modern training methods, and establishing the necessity of an independent cavalry, his doctrine went on to impact both sides of the American Civil War, and it still influences the way the US uses modern air and armoured forces today.

On the night of 14-15 October 1778 Pulaski and his unit fought at Egg Harbor, and at Charleston in May 1779. British troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell had occupied the city of Savannah in 1778; combined Franco-American forces approached the city on 16 September 1779 and laid siege to it. The Legion was to aid General Benjamin Lincoln's forces, and a plan to attack the city was quickly prepared, encouraged by Jean Baptiste d'Estaing, commanding the French forces. The assault was to take place on 9 October, and the army

"PULASKI'S TASK WAS TO ENTER THE CITY AND CAUSE A WAVE OF FEAR AND CONFUSION"



Pulaski was wounded by grapeshot at the Spring Hill Redoubt and died on 11 October 1779

***Above:** Washington is informed that the British have crossed the Brandywine to occupy Philadelphia*

***Above, right:** A memorial service for Pulaski in Chicago, 1929*

***Below:** This monument in Monterey Square, Savannah, is dedicated to Pulaski*

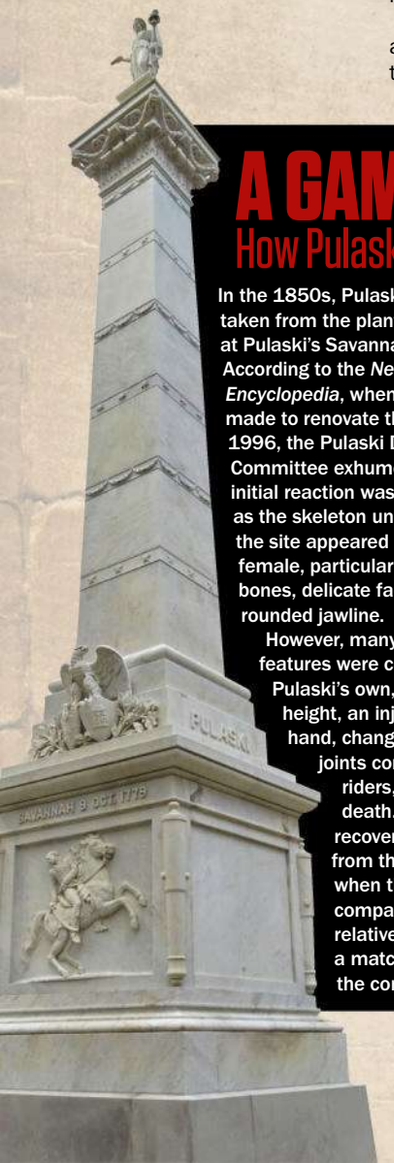
had to cross the river that stretched before them. There was, however, a lack of boats, meaning that the crossing was arduous and long, the cavalrymen having to cross individually, leading their horses beside the boat. After getting around 30 soldiers across, Pulaski decided that was enough to create a reconnaissance unit to scout the enemy area. He placed Captain Paul Bentalou at the head of this formation, and after some time he rode out to meet the captain. Pulaski sent a letter to General Lincoln with information about the situation (the original is held at the Polish Museum of America) in which he wrote: "We are stationed about seven miles [11km] from Savannah at the house of the widow Gibbons..."

The next day, D'Estaing asked Pulaski to send his unit and the French army to the outskirts of Savannah. Although the city was bombed, with the terrified inhabitants hiding in basements, they did not surrender and the decision was made to storm the city. Pulaski's task was to enter Savannah and cause fear and confusion. At dawn on 9 October the attack began but problems soon arose, with some troops becoming stuck in the swamps, and the flanking manoeuvre failed. Confusion reigned, which was worsened by news of the wounding of D'Estaing. Pulaski decided to find him, because he did not want the army to panic due to the lack of a commander.

He wanted to lead the French troops in more attacks, and together with the officers, rode near to the Spring Hill Redoubt. A strong exchange of fire ensued, and Pulaski was hit by cannon grapeshot, which was lodged in his right groin. He was quickly withdrawn from the fray, and an operation was carried out on the battlefield to remove the grapeshot by Dr James Lynah. Pulaski didn't want to be captured by the enemy, so was transported to a field hospital at the Bonaventure Plantation. There, doctors could not do much, as gangrene had set in. It was decided he should be transported to the Greenwich Plantation, so was transferred to the Continental ship Wasp, moored nearby, with the intention of sailing to Charleston. Pulaski died of gangrene aboard the ship on 11 October 1779. According to Anna Kornatek, director of the Pulaski Museum, upon learning of Pulaski's death, Washington set the camp password as 'Pulaski', with the response 'Poland'.

The standard account of Pulaski's death and subsequent burial comes from Captain Paul Bentalou in an 1824 essay in which he claims that due to the rapid deterioration of Pulaski's body, he was buried at sea near Tybee Island. A different account has him buried in South Carolina, while another report tells of a secret burial at Greenwich Plantation near Thunderbolt in Chatham County Georgia. Others maintained that the Polish general had been transported to a French field hospital on a Savannah plantation, and that he was buried there.

Pulaski hasn't been forgotten in either Poland or the US, where people remember and celebrate a hero who fought for freedom both in Europe and the United States of America. As one would perhaps expect, there are numerous monuments and commemorations dedicated to his memory in his home country of Poland. In the US too, there are several monuments dedicated to him, some states have counties called Pulaski, and there are numerous towns named after him, as well as roads, schools and parks. General Pulaski Memorial Day is celebrated by Presidential Proclamation on 11 October each year, coinciding with the date of his death, which includes an annual parade on New York City's Fifth Avenue. Other places in the US celebrate Casimir Pulaski Day on the first Monday in March, coinciding with the date of his birth.



A GAME OF BONES

How Pulaski's remains shocked the world

In the 1850s, Pulaski's remains were taken from the plantation and buried at Pulaski's Savannah Monument. According to the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, when plans were made to renovate the monument in 1996, the Pulaski DNA Investigation Committee exhumed the grave. The initial reaction was one of surprise, as the skeleton unearthed from the site appeared characteristically female, particularly the pelvic bones, delicate facial structure and rounded jawline.

However, many of the skeleton's features were consistent with Pulaski's own, such as his height, an injury to the right hand, changes to the hip joints common in horse riders, and age of death. Researchers recovered DNA evidence from the remains, and when the results were compared to a known relative, they were a match. This led to the conclusion that Pulaski was likely intersex. According to the Cleveland Clinic: "People who are intersex have genitals, chromosomes or reproductive organs that don't fit into a male/female sex binary. Their genitals might not match their reproductive organs, or they may have traits of both. Being intersex may be evident at birth, childhood, later in adulthood or never."

This does not mean that Pulaski was a woman – it is clear that he was always a 'he' as far as his gender is concerned. As the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* points out: "Pulaski presented as male throughout his entire life, and he may have been unaware of his condition." Dr Virginia Estabrook, assistant professor of anthropology at Georgia Southern University, stated that it was only because of the exhaustive historical record of Pulaski's life as a man that she is comfortable to say that the undeniably female skeleton was his. This has raised a question about how intersex people show up in the archaeological records. Dr Estabrook stated that as we don't know what any intersex condition looks like skeletally, Pulaski's skeleton is a start in changing that.

Images: Alamy, Getty

Heroes of the Medal of Honor

WALTER D EHLERS

In the summer of 1944, this young officer led a squad of 12 inexperienced infantrymen through the Normandy Campaign, taking multiple enemy positions and suffering serious injuries in the process

WORDS **LOUIS HARDIMAN**

It was still early in the morning on 6 June 1944, but Staff Sergeant Walter Ehlers sensed something had gone terribly wrong. Glancing up from his overloaded headquarters LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry), poised in the English Channel, he watched as dozens of Allied fighters, bombers and gliders buzzed overhead, bound for inland targets in France. Fading into the distance, the armada passed over the Normandy beachline beyond, where the first wave of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions were already in the thick of the fight. In command of L Company, 18th Infantry, Ehlers was waiting anxiously as part of the planned second wave to take the beach from the Germans. However, it was already clear things were not going to plan, and the airwaves were filled with frantic calls for immediate reinforcement.

Answering the call, Ehlers led the men of L Company to a waiting Higgins boat before motoring towards the beach. The 12 soldiers under his command had never seen battle before that day, but now it was down to them to back up their beleaguered comrades in the first wave. Motoring towards Omaha Beach, Ehlers' boat struck a sandbar, forcing the men to bail out into the cold surf, about 100 yards offshore. Already, the beach was strewn with the dead and wounded – many had been cut down before they could even reach land. Wading under heavy mortar

The view from a Higgins boat as Allied troops storm Omaha Beach in Normandy on D-Day

Ehlers at Memorial Day at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, 30 May 1952. His Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, Silver Star and further decorations are visible

British soldiers take cover in the Normandy hedgerows as Allied forces battled their way through terrain that favoured the defending German troops

HISTORY OF WAR
MEDAL OF HONOR HEROES
IS ON SALE NOW

fire, the squad traversed a narrow passage through a minefield, past the mangled corpses of those who had tragically failed to keep on track.

Reaching the high ground beyond the beach, Ehlers directed his men in an attack on a German pillbox, stopping only to capture four German soldiers, before they continued their advance. Once they reached the open fields of Normandy, L Company encountered the second line of German defenders. Taking cover in nearby hedgerows, they only emerged once the rest of the second wave of the 1st Infantry Division caught up. By midday the 745th Tank Battalion had arrived on the beach and moved up to join the fight. With the 745th's armour in support, L Company moved substantially further inland, establishing a defensive perimeter from where they could wait for further reinforcements. Day One of their Normandy Campaign was over.

A Christian soldier

Four years before leading his men at Normandy, a 19-year-old Ehlers had enlisted in the US Army, along with his older brother Roland. Being so young, he needed his parents' permission to volunteer, so had promised his mother Marie he would be a 'Christian soldier'. Though the US had yet to enter the war, Ehlers suspected it wouldn't be long before he would get his chance to protect freedom and democracy against the scourge of Nazism and fascism.

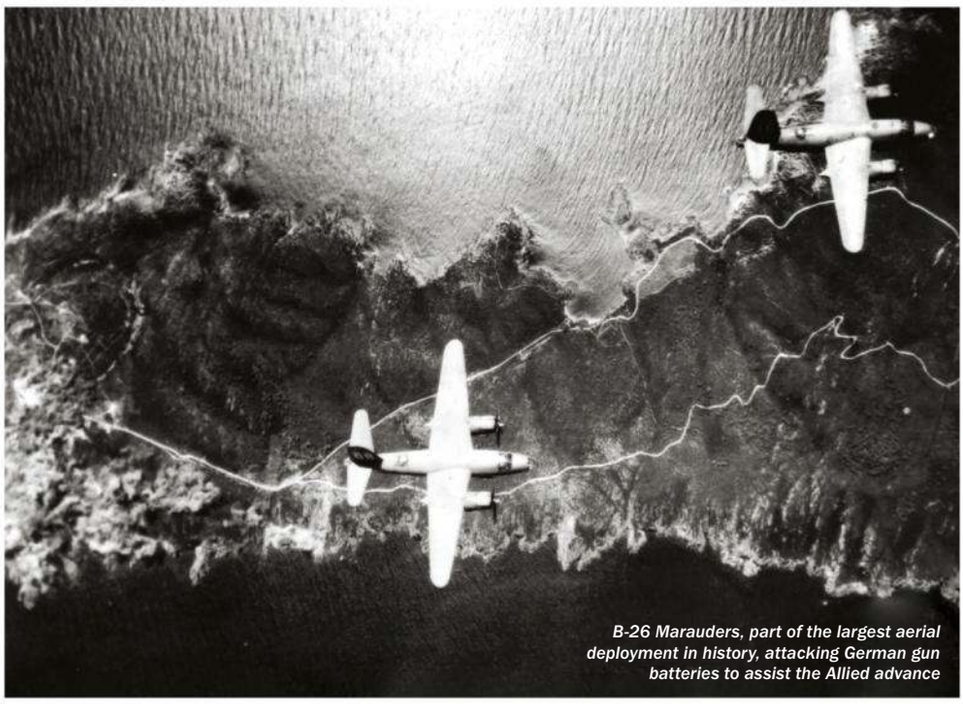
Leaving their native Kansas, the brothers remained close throughout their training, and in 1942 served together in North Africa with the 3rd Infantry Division. Later they were moved to the 1st Infantry Division, known as 'The Big Red One', where they saw action in the invasion of Sicily. After transferring to England, the brothers were separated: Roland was assigned to K Company and Walt to L Company. The US Army had begun separating brothers so families wouldn't lose multiple sons in a single engagement. As fate would have it, Roland's vessel was struck by a mortar shell on 6 June. He was killed instantly but his brother was still on board the headquarters LCI.

Ehlers undeniably fulfilled the motto of The Big Red One while fighting on Omaha Beach: "No mission too difficult. No sacrifice too great. Duty First!" And it was three days later that he went beyond the call of duty to earn his nation's highest honour.

Storming the hedgerow

On 9 June, Ehlers' men began navigating through fields near Goville, an historic Norman village known for its stone houses and narrow lanes. Hearing the platoon to his left taking heavy fire, he rushed his men into a nearby hedgerow that ran toward the German position. Creeping up on the machine gun post, Ehlers detected a four-man German patrol about to cross his path. In a do-or-die moment, he popped up from behind cover and quickly dispatched the enemy with his M1 rifle. He then ordered his men to fix bayonets and continued moving toward their original target. Here, Ehlers took down the machine gunner in close combat, firing his weapon at point-blank range rather than using his blade.

Next in Ehlers' sights were two mortar positions. Capable of launching 8lb (3.5kg) shells at an effective range of nearly 4,000ft (1,200m), these weapons were causing horrific damage behind the L Company vanguard. However, two machine gun positions covered the deadly artillery pieces. Crawling once



B-26 Marauders, part of the largest aerial deployment in history, attacking German gun batteries to assist the Allied advance

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff greets Ehlers at the National Medal of Honor Day during a ceremony at the Pentagon

again towards his target, knowing full well that lifting his head meant instant death, Ehlers eventually came to the position. Opening fire, he personally took down the three mortar operators, despite a hail of return fire kicking up the earth around him. Meanwhile, his squad forced the other mortar operators to flee. "That's where my bayonet came in handy," Ehlers recalled decades later in an interview with *Orange County Register*. "They looked horrified and started running."

Intense fighting continued overnight and into the morning of 10 June. Ehlers' squad was still the in fields surrounding Goville, advancing towards the cover of another hedgerow, when they came under heavy fire from the front and to one side. Retreat was critical if any of Ehlers' men were to survive, but they risked getting shot in the back. In a remarkable act of self-sacrifice, he and another soldier, armed with an automatic rifle, charged onto an exposed mound to give covering fire to L Company.

Dozens of bullets whistled past the two men, but they remained on the mound, keeping the Germans' heads down with a barrage of .30 calibre rounds. Only once their squad was safe did the two comrades attempt to return to safety. As they turned, Ehlers was hit in the back, the bullet bouncing off his rib and back out through his pack. Though severely injured and quickly losing blood, he managed to haul himself to his feet. Looking around, he saw his partner collapsed on the ground with bullet wounds to his leg and arm. Refusing to leave his stricken comrade behind, Ehlers carried him to safety. He then brushed away the medics' attention and returned to the firestorm, picking up his injured comrade's rifle. Finally, Ehlers staggered to his company commander to explain his injuries. Observing his wounds, the company commander exclaimed: "My god, you should be dead; you've been shot straight through."

"THE INTREPID LEADERSHIP, INDOMITABLE COURAGE, AND FEARLESS AGGRESSIVENESS DISPLAYED BY S/SGT EHLERS IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING ENEMY FORCES SERVE AS AN INSPIRATION TO OTHERS"

Medal of Honor citation

Rumours that Ehlers was dead were already circling among the 1st Battalion, but he continued to defy all the odds. After getting the wound on his back dressed, nobody would have begrudged him a medevac. However, he refused, replacing his pack with bandoliers capable of carrying his equipment without rubbing his dressings.

Ehlers continued to fight valiantly after his Medal of Honor action. He next saw combat at the Battle of Saint-Lô, during which 95 percent of the commune was destroyed. Injured again, he endured agonising surgery to remove shrapnel from deep in his leg. He could feel every incision. Afterwards, the inexperienced medic said: "You're the first person I've ever operated on. Can I keep this [the shrapnel] as a souvenir?" Ehlers replied: "Yeah, if you never operate on me again." After returning to his company in the winter of 1944 he was injured again by shrapnel in Hurtgen Forest, passing out from shock. By the time Ehlers woke up, he was in a hospital in Paris, preparing for surgery to remove the bomb fragments from his arms, shoulders and legs.

On the train back to the front after the operation, Ehlers learned that he was getting rewarded for his valour. Not realising who was in front of him, a soldier from Roland's company looked up from his *Stars and Stripes* magazine and said: "I'm reading here that Ehlers' brother is getting the Medal of Honor." Not wanting to say anything until he had received the medal, he replied: "I'm reading that too."

Ehlers quickly received the expected evacuation orders back to Paris to receive his Medal of Honor from General Lee on behalf of President Roosevelt, along with two Bronze Stars, three Purple Hearts and campaign ribbons from Africa, Italy, Normandy and Belgium. This was the first time he learned how many decorations he had been awarded, and he was also given 30 days leave and the chance to go home.

Ehlers continued to see action until the war's end, including getting shelled again at the Battle of Remagen, shot in the leg while a friendly rifleman was cleaning his gun, and injured in a Jeep crash. He continued to serve after the Second World War, albeit his new desk-based role was worlds apart from the maelstrom of Normandy. Working with the Veterans Administration for 29 years, Ehlers interviewed soldiers up to the First Gulf War (1991) and helped them file claims for disability payments, loans and insurance.

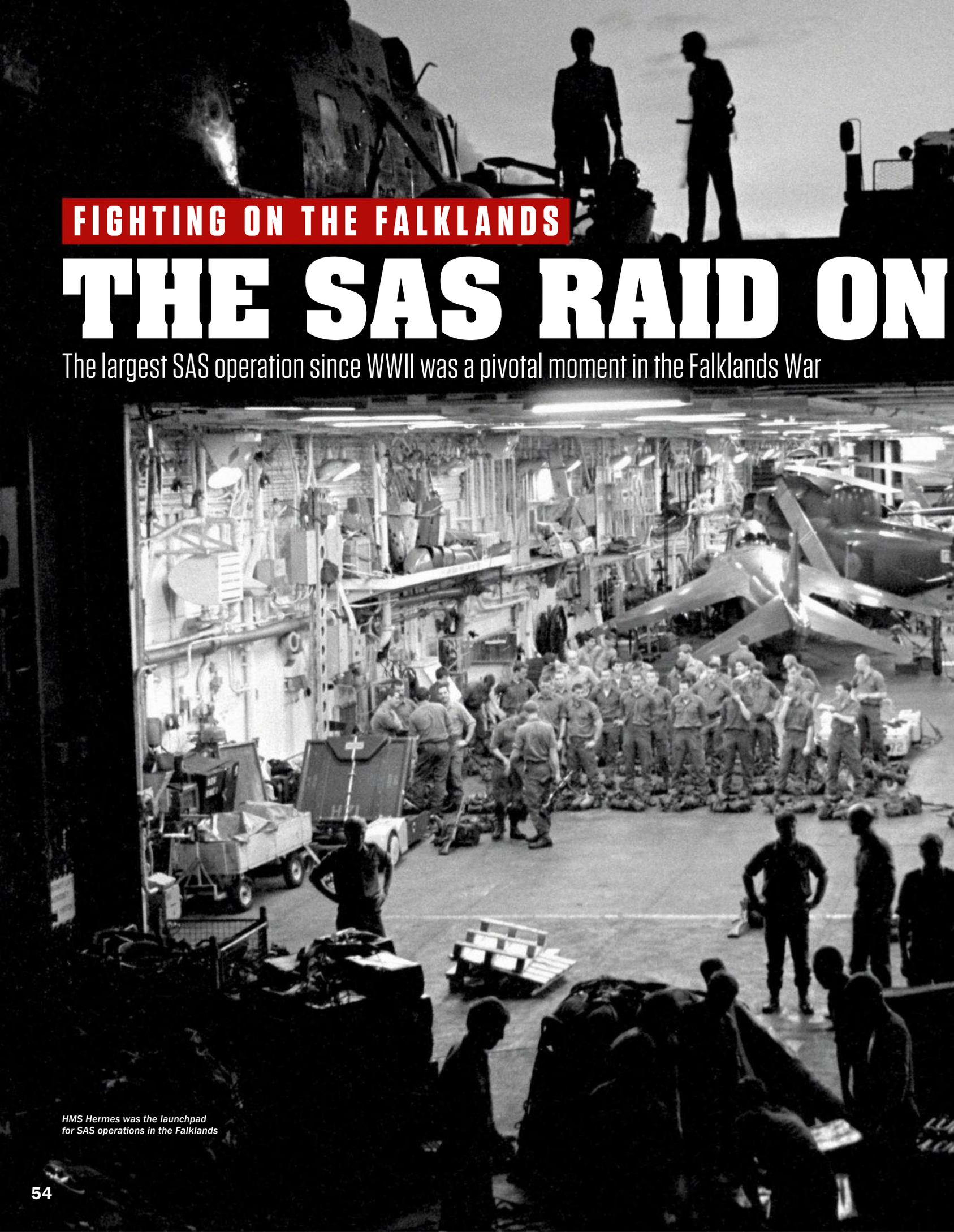
Reflecting on his service in the Second World War decades later, Ehlers said: "The Second World War started the greatest wave of freedom in the world… I want people to know that we never fought these wars for aggression. We fought them because we were fighting for other people's freedom." He died aged 92 in 2014 from kidney failure and was the last surviving Normandy Campaign Medal of Honor recipient.

Images: Getty

FIGHTING ON THE FALKLANDS

THE SAS RAID ON

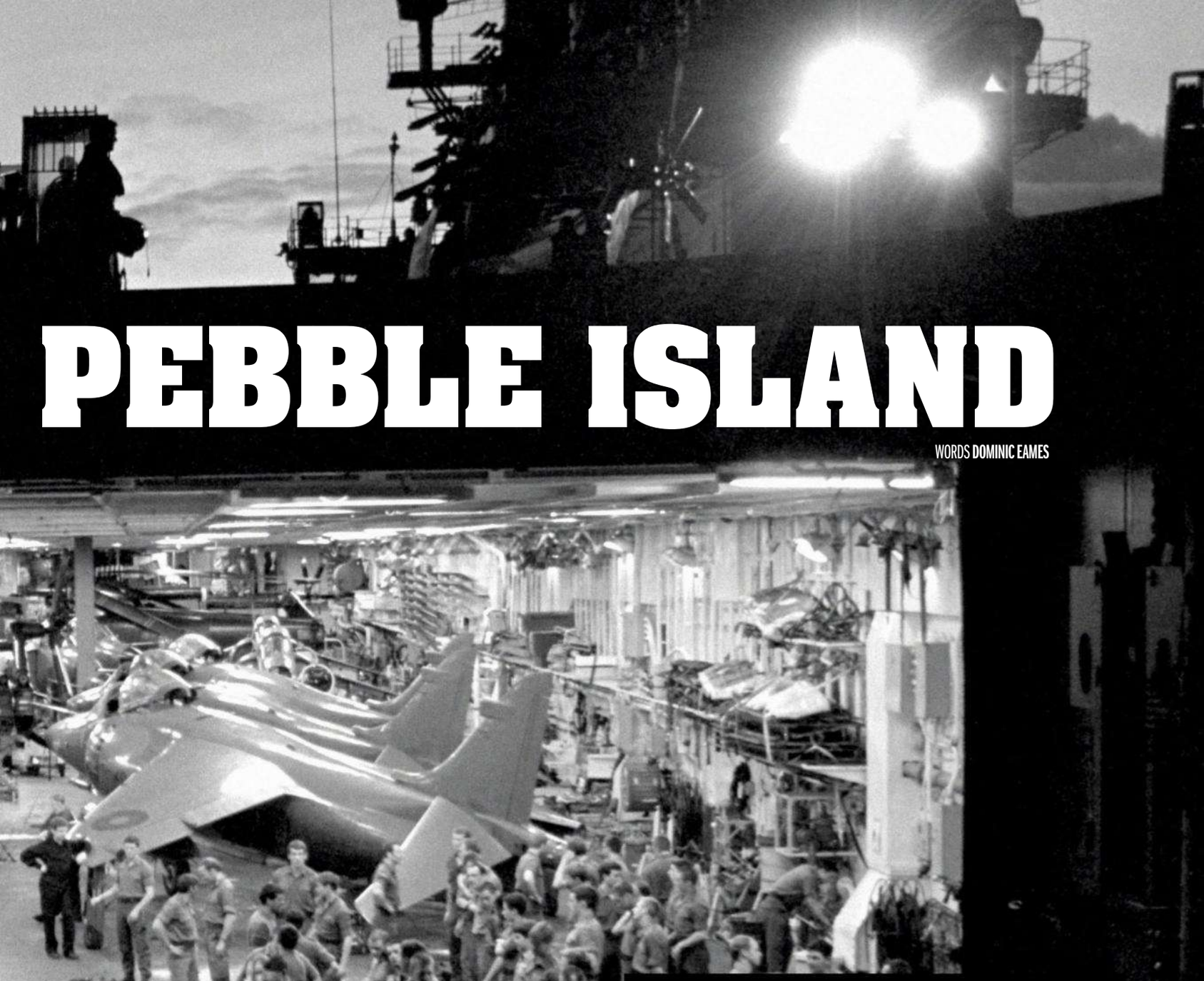
The largest SAS operation since WWII was a pivotal moment in the Falklands War



HMS Hermes was the launchpad for SAS operations in the Falklands

PEBBLE ISLAND

WORDS **DOMINIC EAMES**



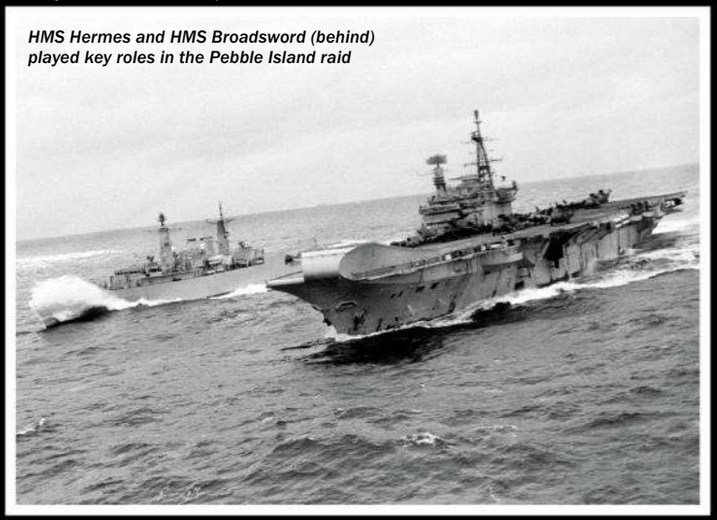
April 1982: Argentinian forces invade the Falklands Islands and trigger a war with Britain. The South Atlantic islands have been in British hands since 1833 and its population (1,850 in 1982) is mostly descended from British settlers, but the Argentinians have long staked their claim to what they call Islas Malvinas, some 400 miles (644km) off their coast. On hearing of the invasion, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher dispatches the largest military expedition since the Suez Crisis of 1956. As the fleet races the 8,000 miles (12,875km) from Britain to the Falklands, it is abundantly clear that central to the campaign will be the elite soldiers of the SAS.

Of huge strategic importance if Argentina was to have any chance of winning the war were the three small airfields on the islands, from which they could attack British ships and impede a counter-invasion. These were at the capital Port Stanley, Goose Green on East Falkland and the tiny Pebble Island at the north of West Falkland. The latter was identified as a potential forward operating base, capable of being upgraded into a launching point for the FAA, the Argentine Air Force.

On 23 April, a plane landed on Pebble Island, or Isla de Borbon, and, as the couple of dozen residents looked on, Argentinian troops disembarked, planted the national flag and sang their anthem. Improvement works got underway and Lieutenant Ricardo Marega was given command of a platoon of the 3rd Marine Infantry

Image: Martin Cleaver / PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

***Above:** Sea King helicopters from HMS Hermes braved stormy conditions to transport the SAS to the island*



HMS Hermes and HMS Broadsword (behind) played key roles in the Pebble Island raid

***Left:** British troops march towards Port Stanley after the landings*

Battalion. Adding engineers and air crews, around 150 men were posted. Soon, Pebble Island was the base for six FMA IA-58 Pucara ground-attack aircraft, four T-34 Turbo Mentors and one Short SC7 Skyvan. All posed a threat to any proposed British amphibious invasion.

British forces similarly recognised the strategic value of Pebble Island and began planning how to best neutralise the threat. The obvious option of an air strike was deemed unfeasible as it put the civilian population in danger. Instead, a special forces operation was preferred. The 22nd SAS regiment – under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Michael Rose and on board the flagship HMS Hermes – was assigned the job of the largest SAS mission since the Second World War, codenamed Operation Prelim.

They did not have long to get everything ready. Rose reportedly stated that an airfield raid might require three weeks of preparation, only for Admiral Sandy Woodward, head of the task force, to tell him that Pebble Island had to be put out of commission in a matter of days. But that was the type of thing the men of the SAS were trained for.

The plan was to insert eight men of Boat Troop D Squadron as a reconnaissance team. Dropped by helicopter on another island near Pebble, they would approach by crossing the sound in Klepper canoes. They would then have to determine exactly how many aircraft there were, their precise positions and the defences in place to protect them.

Once the recce was completed the rest of D Squadron and G Squadron would follow: 18 (Mobility) Troop was responsible for crippling the aircraft, arms and fuel dumps; 16 (Air) Troop was tasked with attempting to seize prisoners; and 19 (Mountain) Troop was held in reserve. The operation would be supported from the sea by the frigate HMS Broadsword and HMS Glamorgan, a destroyer that would bombard the airfield to distract from the presence of the assault force.

All was ready for the reconnaissance mission to get underway on the night of 11 May. After landing at Keppel Island, six of the eight men remained at a hidden position while two, on rotation, made their way to an observation post. This required careful movement and concealment as the barren landscape of the Falklands did not offer much cover. Immediately, valuable information was being gleaned: shortly after their arrival, the team realised that the area intended for a landing zone, off Phillips Cove, was actually a pond.

It took two days to complete the recce and report the findings back to the Task Force, and the final preparations for the night-time raid were made. But stormy weather and strong winds forced the Hermes to move into a riskier position closer to potential Argentine spotters to ensure the helicopters could be launched and recovered. Still, the raid was given the go-ahead and, in the early hours of 15 May, Sea King helicopters took off with 45 SAS troops on board.

"The weather was very cold and foggy for that time of year and did cause some problems landing folks ashore," recalled Lieutenant Commander Roger Edwards. "On the night of the raid, it was generally good visibility, but with a gale from the WNW [west-north-west]. I can remember quite a large sea running as every now and again a breaking crest could be seen level with the door of the Sea King – we were quite low!"

The Sea Kings arrived at the landing zone at 3.50am, quickly unloading the SAS before returning to the Hermes. The men, each carrying around 80lb (36kg) of gear, were armed with M-16 rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, LAW 66mm anti-tank rockets and a mortar. After meeting up with the reconnaissance team, the commander, Major Delves, ordered the SAS to set off for the airfield.

By 6.15am, the mortar position had been set up. But there was a problem: Mobility Troop had become detached during the march and gotten lost. With dawn fast approaching, the reserve troop, Mountain, took over as the assault force and moved into position by 7am. Led by the 29-year-old Captain Gavin John Hamilton, Mountain Troop had

***Right:** A map of the Falkland Islands – Pebble Island is to the north of West Falkland*

***Below:** One of the damaged Pucaras riddled with machine-gun fire from the raid*

SPECIAL FORCES FROM *HISTORY OF WAR* IS AVAILABLE NOW IN ALL GOOD STORES & ONLINE WWW.MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM

"IN JUST 45 MINUTES, ALL 11 OF THE AIRCRAFT ON PEBBLE ISLAND HAD BEEN DESTROYED OR DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR, AND THE MEN WERE BACK IN TIME FOR BREAKFAST"

already seen action on South Georgia – an island located 800 miles (1,287km) east-south-east of the Falkland Islands – invaded by the Argentinians the day after landing on the Falklands. Hamilton and demolitions expert Corporal Raymond Armstrong opted to use charges on the six Pucaras, and small arms fire, grenades and the LAWs on the Mentors and Skyvan.

The raid began when HMS Glamorgan started to rain down 4.5in (114mm) shells on the airfield and two seven-man teams from Mountain Troop made their way, undetected, to the aircraft. They laid charges and began firing. The fuel dump and ammunition stores were destroyed. "Our own mortar opened up, lighting the whole place up like it was bright daylight," said SAS member Jack Ramsey. "There was virtually no enemy fire on us, so the boys got stuck into the planes."

There were six Argentinians on patrol duty that night, but once the Glamorgan's salvo began they found themselves pinned in their shelters and other hiding spots. The marines on Pebble Island were inexperienced and untrained for such an attack. Some tried to emerge when one of the Mentors went up in flames, only to retreat once the SAS spotted them and opened fire. What level of counterattack the Argentinians managed to muster proved ineffective as they could not pinpoint the SAS, and they attempted no advances.

"There was a very short firefight on the strip and a couple of Argentinians were slightly wounded – I do not remember anyone being killed," recounted Edwards. Although there are differing accounts on whether or not a single Argentinian was killed, there were no SAS fatalities and only mild injuries. One man got a piece of shrapnel in his leg, another was concussed, and Armstrong was blown off his feet by a charge and was deafened for several days.

In just 45 minutes, all 11 of the aircraft on Pebble Island had been destroyed or so badly damaged that it was improbable that they could even be salvaged for parts. The SAS then made their way back to the rendezvous to be picked up by the Sea Kings and returned to the Hermes. They were back in time for a cooked English breakfast to celebrate a job well done. One of the helicopter pilots, Richard Hutchings, described it as "the best example ever of a combined operation Special Forces mission since the Second World War".

In a cruel twist of fate, however, while no one died during the raid, the SAS would suffer its worst single loss of life since the Second World War just a few days later in a tragic accident. A Sea King crashed while transporting SAS soldiers – including men who had been on Pebble Island – from one ship to another. It is possible the helicopter was hit by a bird. There were 20 fatalities and only nine survivors.

The raid itself is still remembered as a textbook operation. Such was the success of the men of 22 SAS that the Argentinians did not even know the attack was over: they feared special forces might not have actually left and were lurking in the plains to strike again. The threat of Pebble Island had been extinguished – the airstrip had become so pockmarked with craters that it prevented other craft from landing there – denying the Argentinians a vital reconnaissance and attack base. A week later, the skies were that little bit clearer for the British when they landed on the Falklands at San Carlos.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

DE HAVILLAND VAMPIRE

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

Known as the 'aerial kiddy car', this unique design was Britain's first post-war jet fighter

LOW-SLUNG UNDERCARRIAGE
Without needing to provide clearance for a propeller, the original Vampires had a very short undercarriage. This was extended on fighter-bombers to provide clearance for ordnance and cope with the greater weights.

EVOLVING WINGS
The Vampire's wings changed several times; from the F3 they were enlarged to allow greater internal fuel storage, while fighter-bombers had them strengthened and slightly clipped. The Sea Vampire had enlarged flaps for better low-speed control.

The de Havilland Vampire was built to a 1941 requirement for a jet interceptor, issued against a fear that Germany would develop jet bombers. It first flew in September 1943, and entered frontline service in 1946 with the Royal Air Force (RAF). Initially short-ranged, it was the fastest aircraft ever built at that time, with a top speed of 540mph (870km/h). In 1948 a formation of Vampires became the first jet aircraft to cross the Atlantic. Its diminutive look led to the nickname the 'aerial kiddy car'.

The Vampire had a much less conventional design than its contemporary, the Gloster Meteor, and with its twin-boom tail and oval fuselage demonstrated that British designers could think as far outside the box as their better-known German counterparts. Still, the Vampire was also less versatile than the Meteor, with less capacity in the airframe for development and adaptation. The fighter variant left service with the RAF in 1953, but the Vampire served much longer as a night-fighter (the first jet to do so), trainer and ground-attack aircraft, the latter seeing combat in the Far East and Africa. It would serve in 15 variants in over 30 air forces around the world.

DE HAVILLAND VAMPIRE F1

COMMISSIONED	1941
ORIGIN	BRITISH
LENGTH	30FT 9IN (9.37M)
WINGSPAN	39FT 4IN (12M)
ENGINE	1 X DE HAVILLAND GOBLIN TURBOJET 3,100LBF (13.8KN)
CREW	1
PRIMARY WEAPON	4 X HISPANO 20MM (0.79IN) CANNON
SECONDARY WEAPON	2 X 500LB (225KG) BOMBS OR 8 X 3IN (76MM) ROCKETS

SHORT BUT POWERFUL

The design ensured the jet exhaust pipe was short, avoiding the power loss associated with a longer pipe. This made the exhaust very close to the runway, and could melt the tarmac if the aircraft was stationary too long with the engine on.

"BRITISH DESIGNERS COULD THINK AS FAR OUTSIDE THE BOX AS THEIR BETTER-KNOWN GERMAN COUNTERPARTS"

HIGH TWIN TAIL

The twin-boom tail was a design feature of several early jets. It kept the jet exhaust short, and the twin booms and high tail fin kept the control surfaces clear of the exhaust.

***Below:** Preserved Royal Norwegian Air Force Vampire*

Illustration: Nicholas Forder

Images Alamy

ARMAMENT

The Vampire's main armament was four Hispano 20mm (0.79in) cannon, each with 150 rounds of ammunition, fitted underneath the nose. These were used in the fighter/interceptor variant, and also in the night-fighter, which had an expanded cockpit to allow for an Airborne Interception set in the nose, and a second crewman to operate it. The cannon were also very useful in the ground-attack versions, and were backed up by one 500lb (225kg) bomb and four 3in (76mm) rockets under each wing.

The Vampire's four Hispano cannon under the nose

One of the first Vampire night-fighters, equipped with radar in the nose

"IT WAS SIMPLE AND RELIABLE, ALTHOUGH LACKED A RELIGHT SYSTEM, SO IF THE ENGINE STALLED THE AIRCRAFT HAD TO MAKE A FORCED LANDING"

DESIGN

The Vampire is highly recognisable, with its oval-shaped fuselage and twin-boom tail. The fuselage was balsa and plywood from the cockpit forward, while the rear and the rest of the structure was aluminium or alloy. The fuselage encompassed the cockpit, cannon and the engine, with wing-root air-intakes to feed the engine. The tail-boom allowed for a short tailpipe and kept the rear control surfaces clear of the jet exhaust. The fighter-bomber version had strengthened wings that were slightly clipped for better roll control.

The forward section of the Vampire was made with the same plywood and balsa construction as the de Havilland Mosquito

***Below:** A Goblin starts with a potentially tarmac-melting burst of flame*

ENGINE

The de Havilland Goblin engine was designed by Major Frank Halford and was originally known as the Halford 1. It was based on Sir Frank Whittle's pioneering research. It was slow to accelerate and could lack thrust, although constant improvements pushed the Goblin from 2,100lbf (9.3kN) in earlier models to nearly 3,350lbf (15kN) in later ones. It was simple and reliable, although lacked a relight system, so if the engine stalled the aircraft had to make a forced landing. Australian and French variants used the more powerful Rolls-Royce Nene engine.

***Right:** The de Havilland Goblin turbojet engine was compact and simple, but perhaps underpowered*

Images Alamy

The cluttered cockpit of a Vampire F3

COCKPIT

The Vampire's cockpit was a curious mix of old and new. The cabin was pressurised, but only a few later types had ejector seats. The controls were an ergonomic mess, with instrumentation fitted haphazardly and not always very accessible. The fuel gauges, for example, were blocked from view by the control column. The cockpit was tight, and the night-fighter and some training types needed it expanding considerably to fit a second crewman beside the pilot. However, the pilot did have a good exterior view, with no engine or propeller in front.

***Above:** The cockpit provided the pilot with a good field of view*

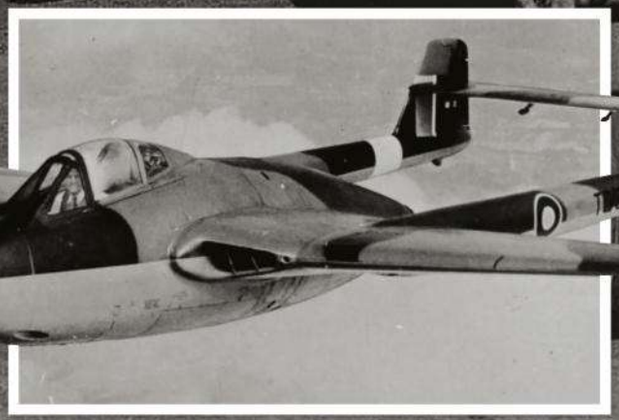
RAF pilots pose with a Vampire, 1951

SERVICE HISTORY

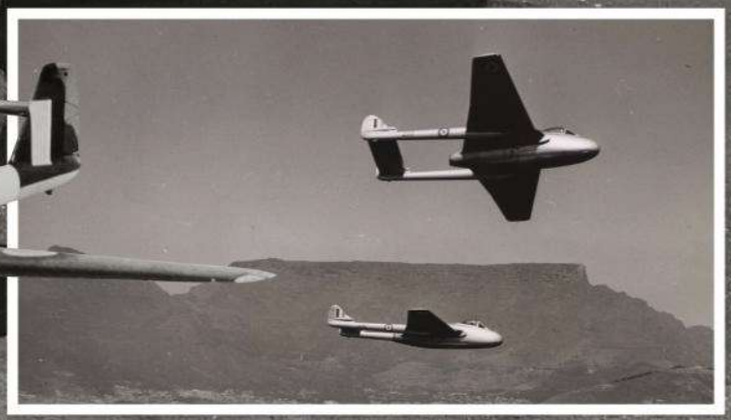
The de Havilland Vampire entered RAF service in 1946 as an interceptor, and although it was withdrawn from that role in 1953, it went on to serve as a fighter-bomber, night-fighter and trainer into the 1960s. The Royal Navy also operated a navalised version, the Sea Vampire. For a short period the fighter held the frontline in the UK and Germany against the Soviet threat, but it was the fighter-bomber that saw combat in the Far East during the Malayan Emergency and, briefly, in Kenya against the Mau Mau. It would also see combat with the Rhodesian Air Force (on attachment with the British over Aden), and with the Egyptian Air Force during the Suez Crisis and against the Israelis in the 1950s. In total, 31 countries used the Vampire, with the Swiss, French and Italians building it under licence. The last operational types were not withdrawn, from Rhodesian service, until the late 1970s.

"FOR A SHORT PERIOD THE FIGHTER HELD THE FRONTLINE IN THE UK AND GERMANY AGAINST THE SOVIET THREAT"

Below: *The type was used by a total of 31 countries*



Below: *A pair of South African Air Force Vampires on patrol*



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The Harvard professor and author discusses what the Second World War can teach us about the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

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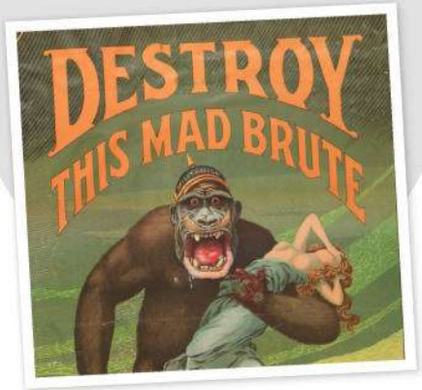

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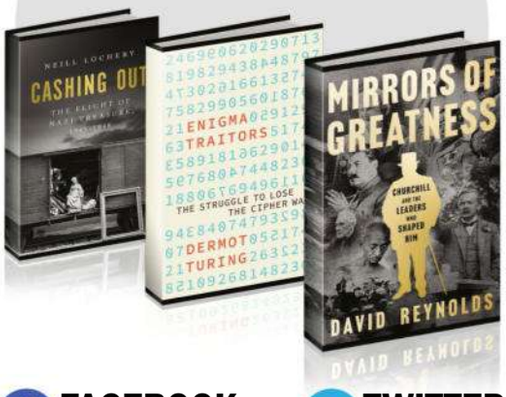

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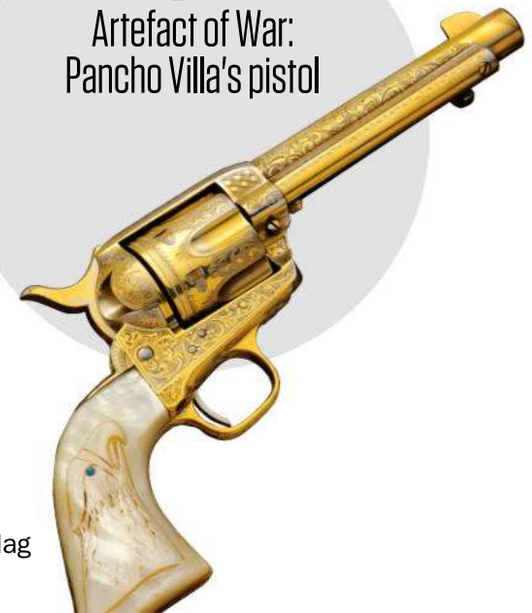

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‘HISTORY IS NOW BACK WITH A VENGEANCE’

Q&A: SERHII PLOKHY

The Harvard professor and author has published an updated edition of his critically acclaimed history of the Russo-Ukrainian War, delving into the deep roots and critical events of the conflict

INTERVIEWER TIM WILLIAMSON

With the war in Ukraine already within its tenth year, since the first annexation of Crimea and insurrection in the Donbas region, there is opportunity to reflect on the deeper roots of the conflict, as well as what history can teach us about where it might lead. Serhii Plokhy is professor of Ukrainian History at Harvard University, and has multiple books published on the history of the region. His critically acclaimed history of the conflict, *The Russo-Ukrainian War*, was written during the first year of the war and is now out in paperback. This latest addition details some of the critical events that transpired since the first publication of the book in early 2023. Here, Plokhy discusses the history of the conflict, its parallels with history and what lessons past wars might lend for its future resolution.

The Second World War looms large in the wider history of this modern conflict, and a lot of parallels get drawn, some inaccurately and many for propaganda purposes. Are there any useful historical comparisons that can be made in understanding and learning from the conflict over 80 years ago?

First of all, in my opinion it is an extremely good thing that there is so much attention being paid to World War II. And I’m saying that not just as an historian, but also in a sense that it means that for a long period of time we didn’t have World War III…

Looking at the parallels between the conflicts started to pop up in the first months of the war, with phrases like ‘this is the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since WWII’. Then we realised that this is the biggest industrial war since World War II. Maybe in terms of the number of troops on the ground, it is behind the Korean War because the Chinese participated in it. But in terms of the length of the front lines, in terms of the casualties, in terms of the amount of the shells being fired… in some cases this war dwarfs World War II, especially when it comes to shells.

So saying that this is the largest war in Europe since World War II and probably the largest in the world is not just rhetoric. Behind that realisation should also come the realisation of the importance of this war, and its consequences. So once you realise that this is not just rhetoric, and there is some reality behind it, we have to give very serious thought to that.

In terms of [other] parallels to World War II, some features are closer to World

Ukrainian reservists and civilians take part in training, January 2022

AUTHOR BIO

Serhii Plokhy is professor of Ukrainian History at Harvard and has published numerous books on the history of the region.

Above: The Lenin monument in Kyiv is covered in anti-communist and pro-independence graffiti, August 1991

Left: Following Ukrainian independence, a crowd holds a demonstration outside Soviet headquarters in Kyiv

War I: for example trench warfare, which has now defined this war for the last year. I write somewhere in the book that in terms of ideology this is a 19th century war, but fought with 20th century tactics and 21st century weaponry.

In terms of the road to World War II and also the Ukrainian War, I really can't, no matter how hard I try, not see a very clear parallel on a number of levels. The first is that we have Nazi Germany and eventually Putin's Russia going for the option of building a 'greater Germany' or 'greater Russia'. So trying to bring within the borders of the state either the German or German-speaking population or ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking population. So that's what the annexation of Ukraine's east and south by Russia, even without controlling it, is about. That's a statement about greater Russia and the parallel is with greater Germany, certainly.

Then with the reaction of the collective West, the parallels are extremely close. The annexation of the Crimea was compared by many to the Anchluss of Austria, and the reaction was more or less to say: 'OK, maybe it's not legal but isn't it fair that all Germans, or all Russians, live within one state?'So it's a bump on the road to better relations and peace.

That is clearly where the parallels are close… when it comes again now [the country] that was looking to achieve appeasement was not Britain but Germany. So history doesn't repeat itself, it rhymes. But it rhymes in a very scary way.

In reference to the war in Ukraine, you write that "history is now back with a vengeance". Nowhere is that statement more accurate than in the Israel-Gaza war. Do you see any connections between the Russo-Ukrainian War and this conflict?

[This] is being literally debated right now in the US Congress, whether the [vote] should go for Israel and Ukraine together, or it should be separate, and for what reason – so from that point of view, it's clear that two things are connected.

President Biden was talking, it seems to me, about two fronts. So clearly there is a sort of division that didn't exist in the world since the end of the Cold War, with the emergence of two camps. The West is back, from that point of view, and the other side is still in the process of formation, but there are still very close parallels with the Cold War – [for example] the Russia-China alliance, Russia in Syria – for anyone who's familiar with the Cold War there is nothing particularly new there. So that's about the return of history.

But one can go even deeper, because what you see both in the case of Israel and Gaza, and in the case of Ukraine, is the ongoing processes of the disintegration of the major global empires still playing out. With Palestine and Israel being former parts of the Ottoman Empire, we have different ideas about what that space should look like, not only in terms of geography but also in terms of what that state should be built around: around nation, some transnational entity, or around religion.

The war in Ukraine is the continuation of the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also the disintegration of the Russian Empire that started back in 1917 in the middle of World War I, the same time when the Ottoman Empire, as it seemed, came to an end; but that was a beginning of another stage, or a reformation, of that question around that space.

So in many ways this 'vengeance' has always flared up throughout history, with periods of relative calm in between?

Right, it took breaks, so to speak. Sometimes lunch breaks, sometimes coffee breaks and we believe that that's a change. It almost reminds me of the commentary on the stock market. Once the bull market goes long enough the voices are there that [indicate] whatever happened in the past doesn't apply any more. This was certainly the case for many of us after the fall of the Berlin Wall, at the end of the Cold War. But it looks like the 'bear market of history' was just waiting for us to get too excited, to get unrealistic in terms of our expectations and actions.

Zaporizhzhia, your home city and region, is at the centre of the Ukrainian military offensive. As an historian, do you have to separate your background and your own personal feelings when writing about something that is literally so close to home for you? Is this a challenge?

It is and it isn't. Again here the parallel to World War II is really very important. A lot of very good work has been done on World War II by historians who at least in moral terms clearly take sides. They don't pretend that somehow Nazism was in terms of ideology equally as valid as liberal democracy. They don't take the position that the aggressor and the victim are somehow equally guilty. But once that position is clear, they still produce a very good book, including on the Third Reich. That work on World War II has become an inspiration for me in terms of taking moral sides without skewing the historical perspective or somehow undermining your skills as an historian.

So that's the easy part in the sense that once you look at World War II, and you look at this good literature, you have a model. But then the challenge is to implement that model [when] you're personally involved. By writing about this war I actually started to appreciate much more the work of my predecessors writing in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties – people who lived through World War II – writing about the war, or history in general. For me with this war came a level of understanding of history, including the history of the Russian Empire, the history of the region, the history of the world that I didn't have before. That came with moral, emotional and other dimensions, which at least in my case were [previously] more intellectual and now it's more than that.

You recently returned to Ukraine visiting family. Did this change your perspective on the war? Was there anything that you judge is being under-reported or overlooked in the Western media?

What has been missed and from the very start and missed for a good reason in a sense because it's very difficult to capture it, is the thing called Ukrainian morale. This was completely excluded from calculations and predictions before the start of the war. The consensus was that Kyiv would fall within two or three days, and the war would be over in two weeks, there would be a blitzkrieg. [Whether]

Images: Getty

Above: (L-R) Russian President Boris Yeltsin, US President Bill Clinton, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma and British Prime Minister John Major sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, December 1994

Volunteers and reservists at a training centre near Kyiv, March 2015

THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR
PAPERBACK EDITION IS AVAILABLE NOW

in the Kremlin or in European capitals with sympathy toward Ukraine, that was more or less a consensus.

When military analysts and the intelligence community were confronted later, the response was that what they were doing was counting tanks. On that basis the predictions were not so off, but then there was the issue of morale – whether Zelensky would leave, whether the Ukrainian Army would fight, or what would happen in the ground. Understanding that morale today is still as important as it was back at the start of the war.

In my experience in Ukraine again… every single aeroplane that I [took] to Ukraine and back was significantly late, and I had counted on Ukrainian trains to be late. I budgeted more time, but they were coming on time.

I was meeting with an official in the general prosecutor's office, and he came on time and we had our discussion. He showed me his phone: that night early in the morning there was an attack on Kyiv [and] three or four buildings were hit on the street parallel to his. He showed me the video, but he was on time, like the trains.

It's easy to talk about terrorism and resilience and things like that. But this is also a society that has this enormous trauma. Before it was a taboo to talk about this with a psychiatrist, or something like that. That is not a taboo in Ukraine anymore.

It's not something carved in stone. You can't take Ukrainian morale for granted, but it's a phenomenon that's difficult to capture. It's wrong to describe it with just one word or one sentence. It's not just resilience, there is resilience, but there is something else.

So that's the state of the Ukrainian society that seems to be the most important factor in this war and also the fact that is most difficult to measure.

Underestimating Ukrainian morale and resilience was certainly a miscalculation on the part of the Western allies, as well as the Kremlin. Do you have any thoughts on why both sides seemingly shared this same oversight?
There is this broad phrase saying that okay, when the generals prepare for the future war, they are really preparing for the last one. We try to look at our experience, to learn from our mistakes. This is also one of the functions of history – we work from the experience. The experience was the annexation of the Crimea back in 2014, where it was done really as a blitzkrieg within a short period of time with little resistance. It took Ukrainians a while to get their act together in the Donbas, but by that time it was too late.

There were also elements within Ukrainian society that were welcoming at that point, in 2014, for the arrival of Russia in different forms. What was missed was the transformation of Ukraine and Ukrainian society between 2014 and 2022. There was an existential threat to the Ukrainian state, to the existence of the nation…

I keep saying that Putin's biggest mistake was attacking Ukraine in 2022, pretty much thinking that Ukraine hadn't changed much since 2014, and that probably was also part of Western thinking.

In terms of the United States, I think they were also recovering from, or even still living through, the shock of being in Afghanistan for so long. [They saw] the numbers of tanks and everything else was okay and fine, but then the Afghan Army disappeared overnight. That probably influenced expectations in the Pentagon in particular, but also Russian intelligence with regards to the war.

So basically the line was drawn on the borders of NATO, because on the one hand Washington created this quite remarkable sanctions coalition, but every statement coming from the White House was basically saying: 'Mr Putin, please don't worry. We will not get involved… please feel free to bomb Kyiv.' That basically was the level of expectations.

You've written about the frustration and the puzzlement you share with many other Ukrainians regarding the slow movement of Western military equipment, particularly armour and aircraft. Do you think eventually when the full history of the war is written, Western failures and delays will be a critical factor?
Yes, absolutely, we talked already about appeasement. Now we are in a period that is very much defined by a different type of 'magical thinking'. If at the start of the war no one counted on the Ukrainian Armed Forces to do anything, in 2023 after numerous successes of the previous year the expectation is that Ukrainians can walk on water. For that reason they didn't need superiority, or even parity in the skies, so the F-16 shouldn't be given to them. The long-range missiles: they don't need them as well, they can successfully break through the Russian defences.

No NATO army, as far as I remember, fought any war without full superiority in the air, without thoroughly destroying the logistics of the enemy deep in the rear. But it was expected on many levels of the Ukrainians, with the expectations being heightened by the performance of the previous year. So once again, we have the same mistake of working from whatever happened before and to extrapolate that into the future. It turned out that Ukrainians are good, but the general rules apply. You need at least parity in the air, and you need the right equipment, unless it's partisan warfare.

So that came as a shock and not the sort of shock that the West is prepared to deal with, not only politically but also in terms of the supplies of needed equipment and shells. There is a big problem there… Europe promised one million shells, and it looks like maybe 30 percent have been delivered so far. Meanwhile, North Korea promised nothing and delivered one million shells [to Russia] – that's what South Korean intelligence tells us. So that's the difference in terms of the alliances. It's not only Ukraine that depends on allies – Russia also depends on North Korean shells, the money coming from China and India [from] oil and also European money coming for gas.

So we compare this war to World War II, and it's global in terms of involvement, but it is fought on the territory of Ukraine. Ukraine was a battleground for both world wars, and now it's basically the exclusive battleground but the confrontation is quite broader. It's not World War III but it's a global war with a very local focus at this point, in terms of the frontlines.

During the break-up of the Soviet Union, Ukraine gave up its stockpile of nuclear

Above: Have Ukraine's allies done enough to supply the country with the heavy weapons it requires?

Left: Ukrainian servicemen fire a 105mm howitzer towards Russian positions near Bakhmut, March 2023

weapons, at the time the third largest stockpile in the world, in exchange for security guarantees from Russia and the West. At the time there were those, including Professor John Mearsheimer, who argued Ukraine should not surrender its nuclear weapons as it was the only way to guarantee its own sovereignty, and peace. What's your assessment of that view?
Mearsheimer was right, in my opinion. What we see today and again we discussed why there is the reluctance of the West to supply what is needed, when it is needed… and the key answer is Russian nuclear weapons. So the concern in the White House is about crossing Putin's red line and they don't know where this red line is, and they keep meditating on where the red line might be, and it's not an easy test for them. But the bottom line is nuclear weapons, that's the key reason. So it's only reasonable also to expect that Russia would behave very differently if Ukraine had nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons in most cases are about deterrence, but it's not like there is no equivalent or replacement for nuclear weapons. In Europe at that time when the nuclear weapons were taken from Ukraine, something that would replace nuclear weapons and their deterrence potential was Article 5 of NATO. So in other words, a very clearly defined guarantee, not assurances as Ukraine was given.

Assurances meant that if you ask, or other countries' 'guarantors' decide to intervene, they have the right to do that; if they decide not to intervene they have the right not to do that. So the guarantees of Ukraine's security were supposed to be given in exchange for nuclear weapons that provided that guarantee – and they were not provided. So in that sense, that clearly was a short-sightedness on a part of the United States and the West.

The removal of the nuclear weapons without providing guarantees created a security vacuum in the centre of Europe. Now we understand that it was only a matter of time before the security vacuum became the source of insecurity for the rest of region.

Have you considered whether the war might end in an armistice – In a similar way that the Korean War ended with the frontlines frozen, but with South Korea remaining independent and able to join the West? Might Ukraine consider negotiating territory for peace if it were able to join the EU and even NATO?
I think that the historical parallels are useful and we talked about how useful they can be in understanding developments, but one should also keep in mind differences. One of the differences is that the end of many [historical conflicts] created, for example, two Germanys, two Vietnams and two Koreas. There is a sense that there were two parts of that individual country. No one was trying to erase nationality as such.

If Ukraine agrees – and again, these things are decided on the battlefield and anything can happen in the war – to a division, the outcome would be one much smaller Ukraine. Because that's what we see in the parts of Ukraine that were occupied – the war started under the slogan of 'Russians and Ukrainians are one and the same people', that means that Ukrainians are really Russians and shouldn't exist as a separate nation and separate group. So the ceasefire would not mean two Ukraines, it would mean one much smaller Ukraine. There's no potential future for certainly what we saw in Germany with the Soviet Union.

Another factor is geography. It's one thing to draw a line on the Korean peninsula… it's another thing if you look at today's frontline in Ukraine, in particular the southern part where the Russians feel threatened that they can be thrown into the Sea of Azov. The Ukrainians feel threatened because the Russian troops are too close to some of the key Ukrainian urban centres.

And it's more than a 1,000km frontline, which means it's almost impossible to defend. So the armistice in this instance for geographical reasons is very difficult to turn into a lasting peace.

These are the correctives to the sort of parallels that we have in the past. Again, looking at the front lines in Vietnam, Germany and Korea, there were more or less straight lines, and defensible on both sides. The current frontline will make both sides vulnerable and [leave them] trying to improve their position the moment they feel that they're ready to do it. It's sort of like a Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan story, where there can be some ceasefires but eventually they dissatisfy both sides… So these are the correctives to the historical parallels that I see, which means those issues, if even taking this parallel seriously and trying to replicate it, should be taken [into consideration].

How do you approach writing the history of a conflict that is still ongoing? Is there something in particular that you have updated since first publication?
Yes, we did an update for the paperback edition, which I finished writing in early September 2023. What really happened between earlier [in 2023] and September [2023] in terms of the frontline – there was a lot of fighting, but very little in terms of any movements that have changed the dynamic of the war. The biggest development to be added to the paperback was the Wagner mutiny led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, and now we can add to that the pogrom in Dagestan.

This basically suggests that Putin's regime is weaker than it tries to present itself and that there are a number of things that the regime has difficulty to predict or to deal with, so the control over the Russian army and Russian society is not as strong as it seems. Probably the longer the war goes on, the more likely there will be a repetition of this scenario, so some sort of revolt, either a civil revolt or a military revolt. But that's something that is very difficult to predict.

Presidential elections are due in Russia in 2024 – In what ways might this influence or impact the war in any way?
I don't expect any change in terms of the regime there. Elections didn't matter much before, now they matter even less. You certainly know who the winner will be. One way in which elections influence the war is that we don't have the next big wave of mobilisation in Russia. Most likely if it happens it will happen after elections. Second, they will try to get some sort of successes on the frontline, to present President Putin as a victor, or at least on the way to victory. So that's how I see the relation between elections and the war, but I don't expect any surprises in this highly choreographed exercise of theatre.

Images: Alamy, Getty

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Explore artistic portrayals of war, question the lavish decoration of weaponry, and discover how the Royal Navy uncovers oceanic mysteries

Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries

The Imperial War Museums' new permanent exhibition explores how artists, photographers and filmmakers tell the story of war

In their first exhibition entirely dedicated to visual art, the Imperial War Museums helps visitors to understand how creatives bear witness to and document war. A substantial work to look out for is Steve McQueen's *Queen and Country* prints, a collection of 160 images on the Iraq War featuring portraits of British soldiers killed on active service. The gallery also features work by the artists Paul Nash and Laura Knight, filmmakers Peter Jackson and Geoffrey Malins, and photographers Cecil Beaton and Tim Hetherington.

The Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries have been divided into four parts. It begins with Practice and Process, which examines the challenges, risks and threat to life faced by those whose material is included in the galleries. Meanwhile, Mind and Body explores the scale of modern warfare, and how its brutality has changed the way the human body is captured in art. It is dominated by *Gassed*, a 20ft-long (6m) painting by Singer Sargent which has recently undergone extensive conservation work. Perspectives and Frontiers focuses on how we imagine and understand the spaces that conflict happens in, featuring work by artists engaging with frightening devastation. This gallery also takes to the air to understand how aerial warfare has been captured from the Second World War to the age of drone warfare. Finally, Power of the Image investigates the role of visual art as a tool for propaganda and protest in conflict spaces. It further reflects on the role images play in documenting war crimes and atrocities, including the new acquisition *Abu Ghraib* by Mohammed Sami. *Abu Ghraib* looks behind stereotypical imagery of trauma to articulate his first-hand experience in an abstract and cerebral way.

"Artists, filmmakers and photographers are eyewitnesses, participants and commentators on conflict," says Caro Howell, director-general of Imperial War Museums. "Their work provides critical insight and perspective, while also having the power to deeply move us. We are therefore extremely grateful to our supporters, particularly the Blavatnik Family Foundation, for their generous support in making these beautiful galleries a reality, for enabling us to shine a light on our exceptionally rich visual media collections and for bringing them to a wider audience."

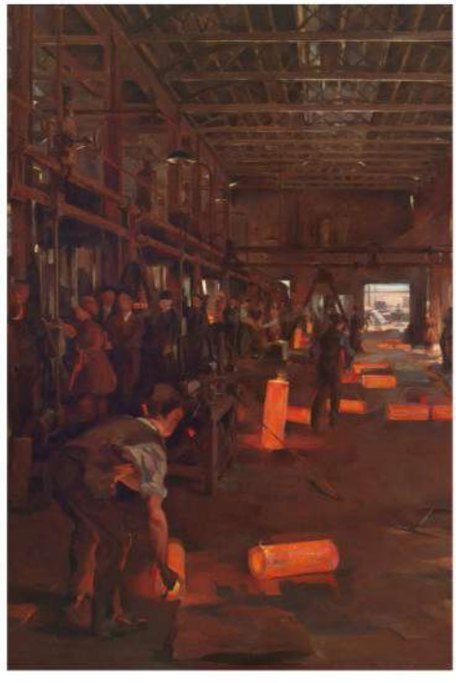
An artist's impression of the Perspective and Frontiers space, one of four galleries which make up the exhibition

The Blavatnik Art, Film and Photography Galleries have been opened as part of the third phase of the Imperial War Museums transformation, aiming to share more of their art collection which includes 23,000 hours of footage and 12 million photographs. The galleries are open now, with free entry.

For more visit: www.iwm.org.uk

A striking example of propaganda during conflict, this First World War recruitment poster is featured in the Power of the Image gallery

Tim Hetherington's War Blind series (1999 – 2004) features portraits of those who lost their sight during the Sierra Leone Civil War



A Shell Forge at a National Projectile Factory, Hackney Marshes, London, 1918 by Anna Airy, the Imperial War Museums' first female war artist

Images: Imperial War Museum

Re:Loaded

This exhibition asks a challenging question: 'Why attempt to beautify such deadly weapons?'

Royal Armouries, the national museum of arms and armour, brings a unique perspective to its collection of weaponry with Re:Loaded, a new pop-up exhibition focussed on lavishly decorated pieces. Here, you can find weaponry that has been plated with precious metals, intricately carved and painted, or encrusted with gemstones.

The exhibition explores how guns can be loaded with meaning, used as peace campaign symbols, tokens of love, and as diplomatic gifts, and it poses questions about whether or not it's appropriate to beautify these deadly instruments. As well as firearms, Re:Loaded also features work by peace campaigner, artist and photographer Bran Symondson. Inspired by his time in the special forces and Afghanistan, Symondson aims to turn weapons of fear into something beautiful and intriguing. His most iconic works completely cover AK-47 machine guns with vibrant butterflies.

Re:Loaded is a one-of-a-kind and thought-provoking firearms exhibition that juxtaposes the Royal Armouries' collection and encourages us to rethink the symbolism of guns. It runs from 16 December 2023 to 31 May 2024, is free, and is suitable for all ages.

***Below:** A gold-plated AK-47 machine gun on display at the Royal Armouries' thought-provoking new exhibition*

***Below:** The butt of a matchlock musket decorated with a traditional hunting scene from Pakistan (1801-30)*

Images: Royal Armouries

For more information visit: www.royalarmouries.org

Worlds Beneath the Waves

Learn how the Royal Navy has remained at the forefront of scientific discovery since the HMS Challenger Expedition 150 years ago

The National Museum of the Royal Navy has embarked on a new exhibition called Worlds Beneath the Waves in partnership with the National Oceanography Centre. It begins with the voyage of HMS Challenger and tells the story of the Navy's 150 years of pioneering scientific research. The exhibition then gives a unique perspective on the Navy's ongoing work through recordings of interviews with the scientists at the vanguard of the scientific community.

HMS Challenger was a Pearl-class corvette that commenced its monumental journey in 1872 from Portsmouth Harbour. Over four years, Challenger ventured 68,890 nautical miles with a full complement of leading oceanographic scientists and state-of-the-art equipment. It ventured into uncharted deep waters, discovering new species of sea creatures and locating the nearly 36,000ft-deep (11,000m) Mariana Trench. The Challenger Exhibition put the Royal Navy at the forefront of marine biology, geology and oceanography, where it remains.

Diana Davies, head of conservation at The National Museum of the Royal Navy, says: "HMS Challenger's legacy extends far beyond its famous voyage. The expedition inspired generations of ocean scientists and the data the expedition generated is still being used to help us understand the wonders of the deep sea, even today."

Worlds Beneath the Waves is a family friendly exhibition with various interactive exhibits suitable for all ages, including an AI tool that kids can use to generate unique sea creatures. The exhibition is open now at The National Museum of the Royal Navy, located at Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard. Tickets are from £24.

The HMS Challenger Expedition discovered weird and wonderful species that thrive in the deepest oceans

Despite its daft name, Boaty McBoatface is a cutting-edge vessel essential for discovering the deep waters first charted by HMS Challenger

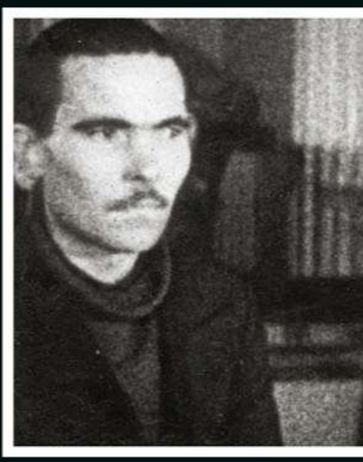
Images: The National Museum of the Royal Navy

For more information visit: www.nmrn.org.uk

WWII THIS MONTH...

DECEMBER 1943

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict



BARI MUSTARD GAS DISASTER

On 2 December 1943, Luftflotte 2 (Air Fleet 2) launched a surprise raid on the Italian east coast port of Bari, sinking 27 Allied cargo and transport ships, including the John Harvey. It was carrying 2,000 60-70lb (27-32kg) mustard gas bombs, which exploded, showering the remaining ships with liquid sulphur. Over 1,000 were killed, and Churchill ordered the deaths be reported as "burns due to enemy action" in a cover up to avoid a German chemical warfare escalation.

Images © Alamy, Getty

From left, Soviet collaborator Mikhail Bulanov and the Germans Hans Ritz, Reinhard Retzlaff and Wilhelm Langheld on trial

SOVIET WAR CRIMES TRIALS

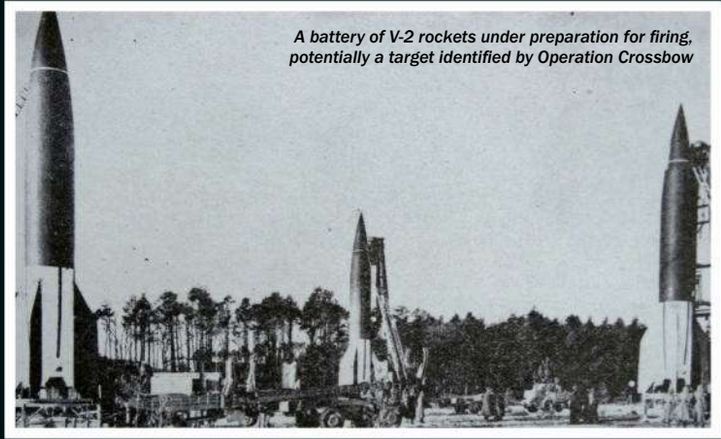
The first war crimes trial of the Second World War was held on 18 December 1943 following the liberation of Kharkov in August that year. It was motivated by the discovery of mass graves of Jews murdered in the city. The court found Wilhelm Langheld, Hans Ritz, and Reinhard Retzlaff of the Wehrmacht, SS and police guilty of murder and torture. Meanwhile, Mikhail Bulanov was charged with treason due to his role as a driver of the Gestapo's 'murder van'. All four men were hanged on 19 December 1943.

"BULANOV WAS CHARGED WITH TREASON DUE TO HIS ROLE AS A DRIVER OF THE GESTAPO'S 'MURDER VAN'"

Allied ships destroyed by a German air raid on Bari, with mustard gas released into the air

OPERATION CROSSBOW LAUNCHED

In May 1943, Allied surveillance planes observed six V-2 rocket and 96 V-1 flying bomb launch sites. Further intelligence gathered by the Austrian resistance group CASSIA revealed production sites for the V-weapons programme. Allied air forces now had enough information to launch precision strikes on sites associated with the V-weapons programme that was reportedly capable of launching 2,000 strikes against England per day. Launching Operation Crossbow in early December, a combined operation of the USAAF and RAF used Martin B-26 medium bombers for daytime raids, which attacked 54 sites, destroying seven by the end of December.



A battery of V-2 rockets under preparation for firing, potentially a target identified by Operation Crossbow

STIGLER'S ACT OF MERCY

On 20 December 1943, Franz Stigler, a BF-109 pilot in Jagdgeschwader 27 of the Luftwaffe, came across Second Lieutenant Charles Brown's severely damaged B-17 bomber, nicknamed Ye Olde Pub, near Bremen. Despite Ye Olde Pub's successful raid on a Focke-Wulf 190 factory, Stigler spared the nine surviving men on the B-17, escorting them back into Allied territory. Brown and Stigler would finally meet again in the early 1990s, and they remained close friends until their deaths in 2008.

A stricken B-17 bomber, similar to Ye Olde Pub flown by Charles Brown and his crew

ANCIENT ROME SPARED BOMBS

On 29 December 1943, the supreme commander of the Allied Forces in Europe General Dwight D Eisenhower directed Allied commanders to avoid attacking historic monuments, particularly in Rome. In a cable, he said: "We are fighting in a country which has contributed a great deal to our cultural inheritance." While understanding that monuments may become collateral damage during the Allies' advance, he argued that "monuments can be spared without any detriment to operational needs". Eisenhower's order helped save Italy's ancient heritage from the horrors of the war.

An aerial image of Rome during the Second World War, with its landmarks notably preserved

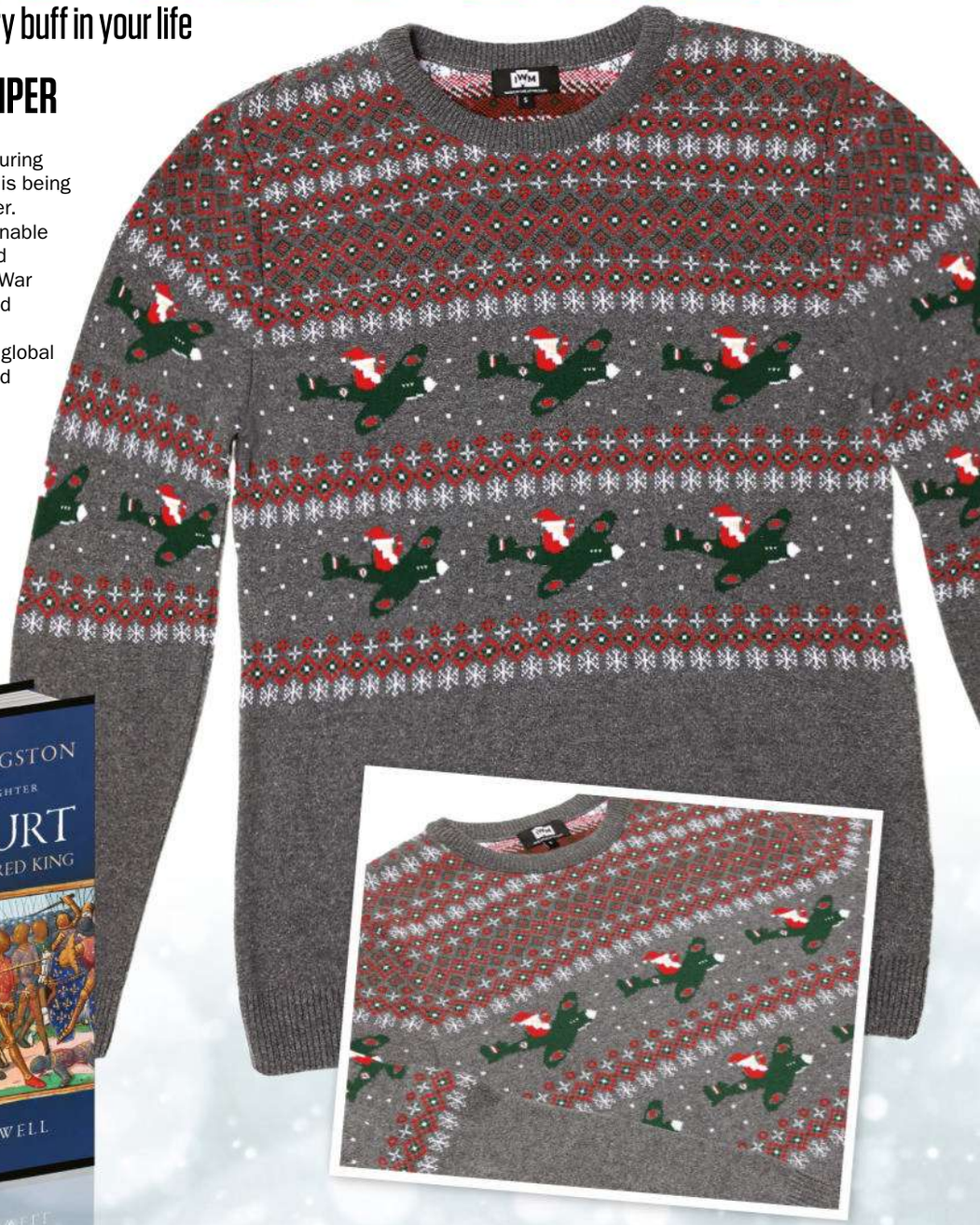
HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

The perfect presents for the military history buff in your life

SANTA IN A SPITFIRE IWM XMAS JUMPER

£45 shop.iwm.org.uk

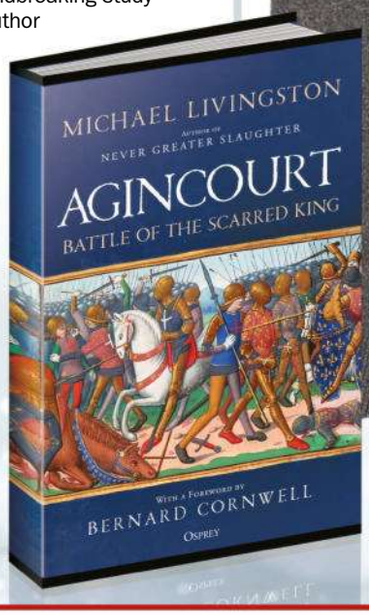
One of the most enduring symbols of Britain's victory during the Second World War, this holiday season the Spitfire is being celebrated with the IWM Shop's 2023 Christmas jumper. "Our Christmas jumpers, made in England using sustainable fabrics, have become an instant bestseller," says David Fenton, Head of Retail and Admissions at the Imperial War Museums. "We create a new design each year in limited edition. I have to say, I think this is our best one yet!" All sales go back to the IWM – a registered charity and global authority on conflict – to help preserve its collection and stories for future generations.



AGINCOURT: BATTLE OF THE SCARRED KING

£20 www.ospreypublishing.com

Agincourt is one of the most famous battles in English history, and a defining part of the national myth. This groundbreaking study by Michael Livingston, author of *Never Greater Slaughter*, presents a new interpretation of Henry V's great victory. "This astonishing book fixes the myth of Agincourt," says Bernard Cornwell, bestselling author of *The Last Kingdom* series. "[It] adds to our understanding of what led to that slaughteryard of horrors, atrocities and, for at least one side, unforgettable glories."



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TURN TO PAGE 24

GENERAL ORDERS: WORLD WAR II

£25 www.ospreypublishing.com

You can take command over a critical battlefield of the Second World War in this new tabletop card-and-counter game. With scenarios spanning from the Italian mountains to the Pacific islands, two players must compete to seize strategic assets, unlock special abilities and thwart their opponent's tactics.

Design partners David Thompson and Trevor Benjamin are the creators behind *General Orders: World War II*, which combines the dynamic tactical gameplay of a traditional wargame with the cut-throat decision-making of worker-placement games.

GREAT WAR AVIATION SOCIETY 2024 CALENDAR

£10 www.crossandcockade.com

This Christmas marks the 25th edition of the Cross and Cockade International Calendar, created by The Great War Aviation Society. It features 12 stunning original colour paintings by the world's best aviation artists, including Graham Turner. Since its first edition, the calendar has raised £50,000 for the British Air Services Memorial at St-Omer, which commemorates the 8,000 airmen who died in France and Flanders during the First World War.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

£13.99 www.magazinesdirect.com

Pushed back by the Allied forces intent on seizing Berlin and destroying the Third Reich, Hitler launched an audacious plan to turn the tide of war in Germany's favour. The new fifth edition of *Battle of the Bulge* tells the story of how Hitler's commanders made one last assault. Over five weeks, the remnants of the Wehrmacht in Western Europe committed all its strength and resources to a counter-attack against an enemy that thought the Nazis were beaten.

STALIN: THE COURT OF THE RED TSAR

£150 www.foliosociety.com

In 2003, historian Simon Sebag Montefiore released his seminal work on Stalin's inner circle, using previously unseen archive material and interviews with surviving members of Stalin's inner circle. Alongside Sebag Montefiore's original portrayal of the debauchery and paranoia of Stalin's court, this new edition from The Folio Society includes a stunning selection of photography from the David King Archive across two volumes, many of which have never previously been published.

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books

MIRRORS OF GREATNESS

CHURCHILL AND THE LEADERS WHO SHAPED HIM

A RIVETING EXAMINATION OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO INFLUENCED BRITAIN'S GREATEST WARTIME LEADER

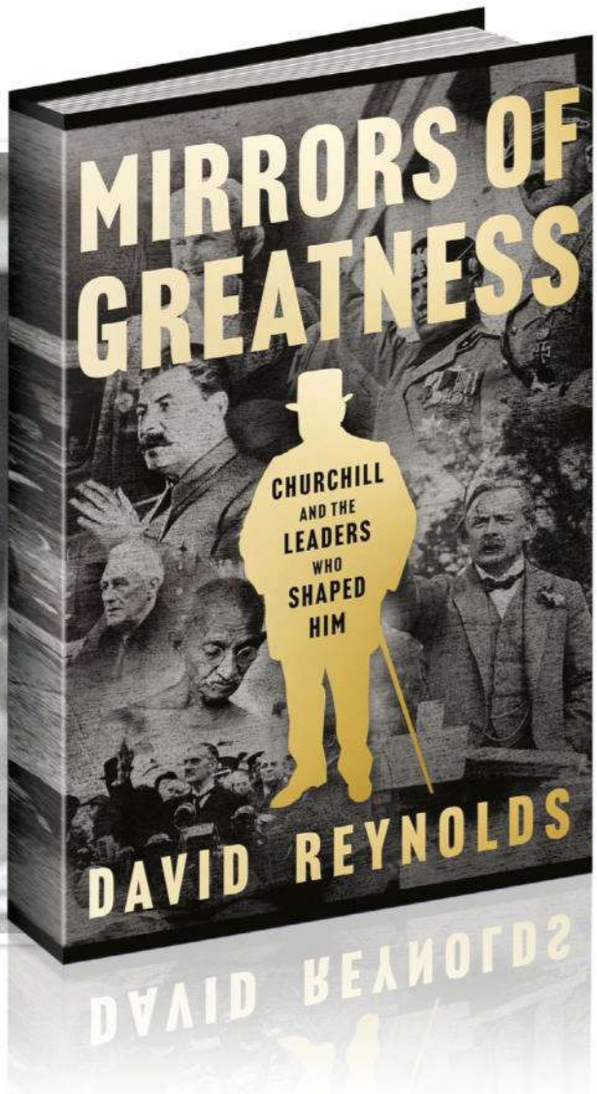
Author: David Reynolds **Publisher:** William Collins **Price:** £25 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

Professor David Reynolds needs no introduction – he is a hugely accomplished historian with numerous books published on the 20th century. He is therefore no stranger to Winston Churchill, having written extensively on the wartime Anglo-American alliance, and this is his fourth book on Churchill. In *Mirrors of Greatness* he takes a new approach and looks at a dozen figures who helped shape Churchill. Those included read rather like a greatest hits list and hold no real surprises. The key ones are Winston's father Lord Randolph; Liberal politician David Lloyd George, a father figure and political mentor; Neville Chamberlain, who Churchill succeeded as prime minister in May 1940; and Franklin D Roosevelt.

The author includes just one woman, Churchill's wife Clementine. Arguably she more than held her own with Churchill and played an important part in his rise to international prominence. The omission of his mother is disappointing as she was such a formative, if absent, figure after his father died. Her calling in favours facilitated many of Churchill's early military escapades. Likewise his nanny and surrogate mother Mrs Everest taught him affection, loyalty and service. When he was 17 and she was no longer required he secured her employment with his grandmother.

"ALTHOUGH CHURCHILL INITIALLY CHAMPIONED THE FREE FRENCH LEADER'S CAUSE, HE SOON DISCOVERED THAT DE GAULLE WAS A DIFFICULT MAN TO WORK WITH"

Churchill pictured with his wife Clementine in November 1923



The inclusion of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin could be considered controversial as they can hardly be considered role models in terms of greatness. Nonetheless, of course, it was their actions that moulded Churchill as a wartime leader. More contentious is the inclusion of Gandhi. Churchill viewed him as a troublemaker, intent not only on undermining British authority in India but also on inciting sectarian violence between the Hindu and Muslim communities. He held the nationalist leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammed Ali Jinnah in much higher regard as politicians, but they are not covered.

The inclusion of Charles de Gaulle is also somewhat odd. Although Churchill initially championed the Free French leader's cause, he soon discovered that de Gaulle was a difficult man to work with. De Gaulle fervently put the interests of France before those of the Allies. This resulted in friction between Churchill and Roosevelt. The latter felt that de Gaulle had the makings of a dictator. Eamon de Valera, another of Churchill's nemeses, perhaps should have also been included as they were sparring partners from the days of Irish independence. De Valera's insistence on neutrality during the Second World War made life extremely difficult for Britain. This was especially the case at the height of the Nazi invasion scare and the Battle of the Atlantic.

The book concludes with a chapter on Churchill, which is apt as he assiduously crafted his own legacy and myth through his speeches and writings. This, Reynolds highlights, was not always done elegantly. "I do not describe it as history," Churchill said somewhat disingenuously of his history of the Second World War. *Mirrors of Greatness* is most definitely history written by an author who is a master of his subject matter. It is, as you would expect, a finely written assessment and a must for anyone with an interest in Churchill. **ATJ**

Liberal politician David Lloyd George was a father figure and mentor to the young Churchill

CASHING OUT

THE FLIGHT OF NAZI TREASURE 1945-1948

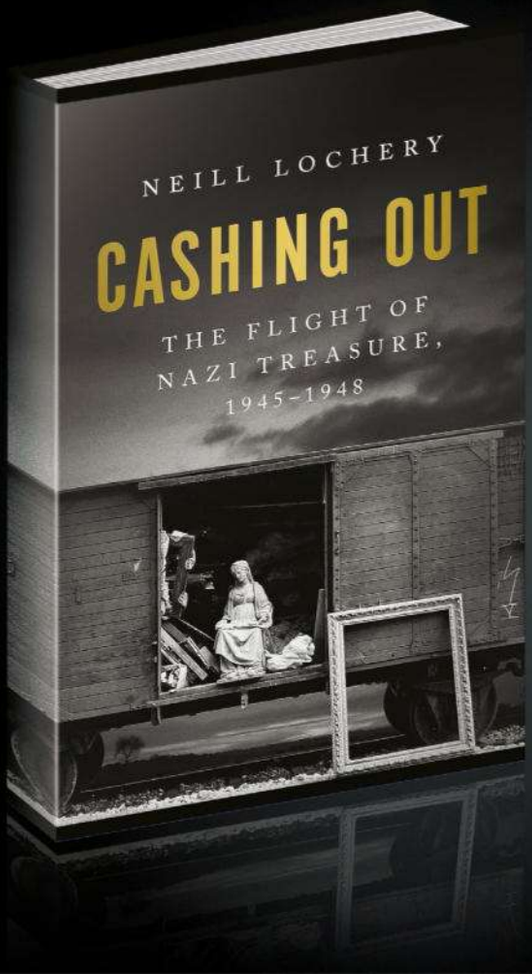
HOW THE THIRD REICH TRADED VAST QUANTITIES OF LOOTED ART AND TREASURE WITH NEUTRAL COUNTRIES TO KEEP ITS WAR MACHINE GOING

Author: Neill Lochery **Publisher:** Public Affairs
Price: £25 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

The Nazis may have portrayed their project as a noble ideological crusade, but in reality it was little more than gangster capitalism. In recent years, books like David de Jong's *Nazi Billionaires* have shed light on this as well as the fortunes made by various oligarchs and organisations. This new book by historian Neill Lochery now seeks to expose the governments that also profited from the Nazi regime's ill-gotten gains.

Lochery starts by explaining that a fifth of Europe's art and treasure was seized by the Nazis during the Second World War. It's a staggering fact that sets up a staggering tale and we're soon introduced to its key protagonist Walter Schellenberg. As head of German intelligence, Schellenberg had spent much of the war schmoozing influential people in neutral countries. When it ended, he turned stool pigeon to save his own skin and the intelligence he gave to the Allies offered a unique insight into Germany's wartime trading arrangements. He explained, for example, how looted gold was used to pay neutral states for the raw materials the Nazis needed to keep their war-machine going. More pressingly, he also revealed how these trading connections were now being used to traffic Nazi fugitives and their plundered wealth across the Atlantic to South America from Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal and Spain. His testimony was to prove critical in shutting down these rat-runs.

Cashing Out is a fascinating, often indignant, read that sheds fresh light on arguably the greatest act of larceny in human history. **NS**



Walter Schellenberg, head of German intelligence, masterminded the Nazis' trading arrangements

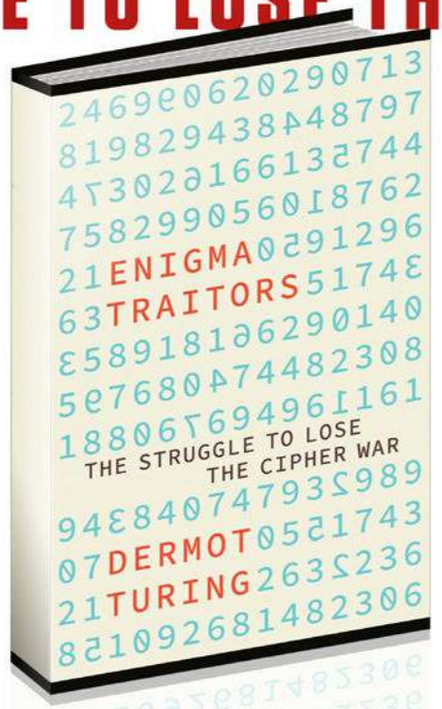
Images: Getty

ENIGMA TRAITORS

THE STRUGGLE TO LOSE THE CIPHER WAR

SHEDDING NEW LIGHT ON THE ENIGMA STORY TO EXPOSE HUBRIS AND INCOMPETENCE ON BOTH SIDES

Author: Dermot Turing
Publisher: The History Press
Price: £20 (Hardback)
Released: Out now



The story of Bletchley Park's code breakers has achieved near-mythic status in recent years and this book seeks to explode that myth, or at least stand it on its head. Like RT Howard's *Spying on The Reich*, it sets out to show how incompetence and hubris caused frequent, often fatal, errors to be made. However, *Enigma Traitors* arguably offers us a more rounded picture by demonstrating that these shortcomings weren't restricted to the Allies' intelligence endeavours.

Structured by the author Dermot Turing into three acts (complete with a cast list) it seeks to retell this famous story through a dramatised narrative, one in which each of its key players gets to take a turn in the spotlight. We get everyone from Enigma's brilliant inventor to the devious corporate players, politicians, and spies who profited from it, as well as the author's uncle, a certain Alan Turing.

It's Enigma, however, that takes centre stage. At one point, the author even describes the machine as "an evil genius" that was "born in the shadows", a reference to its illicit origins in a Weimar Germany, whose military prowess had been curtailed by international law.

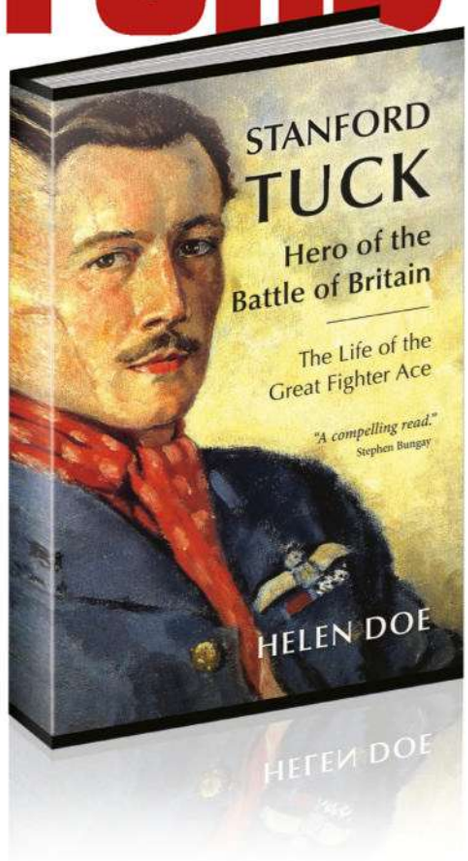
The author is as accomplished at bringing Enigma to life in this way as he is at explaining its beguiling complexities. The machine and its code are at the heart of everything he writes about here, from British bureaucratic ineptitude to German obstinacy. Authoritative and compelling, this work sheds fresh light on intelligence deficiencies on both sides during the Second World War. **NS**

STANFORD TUCK

HERO OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

THIS NEW STUDY OF THE FORMIDABLE AND CELEBRATED RAF PILOT TAKES AWAY SOME OF THE DRAMATIC GLOSS OF PREVIOUS BIOGRAPHIES AND ATTEMPTS TO REVEAL THE REAL MAN BEHIND THE LEGEND

Author: Helen Doe
Publisher: Grub Street Publishing
Price: £25 (Hardback)
Released: Out now



Most who are familiar with the story of Bob Stanford Tuck, one of the RAF's greatest fighter pilots of the Second World War, will be familiar with his tale through the breathlessly exciting 1956 biography *Fly for Your Life* by Larry Forrester. Hitherto, that ripping *Boys' Own-style* adventure story was the only source of biographical detail about a man dubbed 'The Immortal Tuck'. The trouble was that this book was written when authors needed to add excitement in those drab post-war years. As a result, many of the accounts in Forrester's work were somewhat embellished.

In writing a historically accurate biography of Tuck, Helen Doe faced considerable challenges – not least to present his story in an honest light and to not draw accusations that this work is simply 'revisionist'. But Doe's work is nothing of the sort. Instead, she presents an honest and engaging account of a truly remarkable man.

In *Stanford Tuck: Hero of the Battle of Britain*, we don't find a re-work of the often unbelievable read that was Forrester's. Instead, we have a balanced, well-researched and well-crafted account which presents Tuck in a better and more honest light, and one that removes the many of the myths and distortions his tale has accumulated. Importantly, Tuck comes out of this highly recommended work as the national hero he certainly was. **AS**

DESERT ARMOUR

TANK WARFARE IN NORTH AFRICA, GAZALA TO TUNISIA, 1942-43

WWII IN THE DESERT OF NORTH AFRICA PRESENTED A UNIQUE SERIES OF CHALLENGES, AND ASPECTS OF ITS PROSECUTION REMAIN VALID TODAY

Author: Robert Forczyk **Publisher:** Osprey Publishing **Price:** £35 (Hardback), £23.99 (Kindle) **Released:** Out now

Although the Second World War in the desert of North Africa was a protracted series of thrust and parry that steadily consumed a greater quantity of men and resources, both Allied and Axis, Robert Forczyk points out that it fostered strategies and tactics that have survived to this day, their validity confirmed in further actions stretching into the 21st century.

Much has been written and debated regarding the desert war, and in *Desert Armour: Tank Warfare in North Africa, Gazala to Tunisia, 1942-43*, Forczyk follows the Osprey hallmark of detailed and meticulous research to produce a scholarly and entertaining contribution to the body of work on this fascinating theatre of the conflict. This is the second volume in the series – the first, *Desert Armour: Tank Warfare in North Africa, Beda Fomm to Operation Crusader, 1940-41*, was released in February 2023. Forczyk, a skilled historian and analyst who currently works as a consultant in Washington, DC, picks up the story of the North African campaign with General Erwin Rommel's second major offensive in Libya and carries through to the defeat of Panzer Armee Afrika in Tunisia.

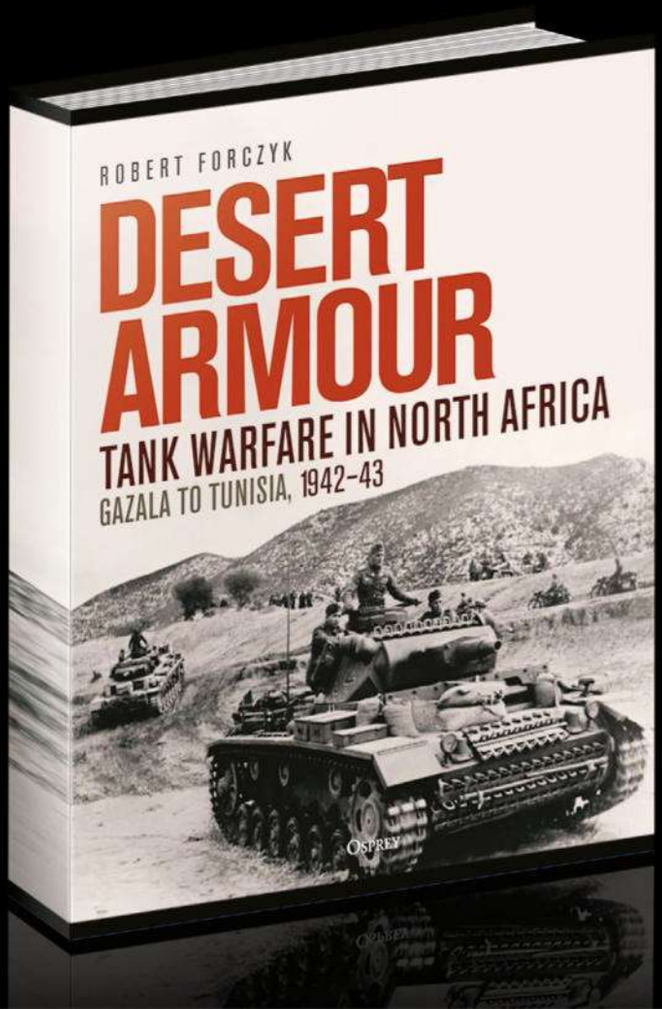
Along the way, Forczyk, a retired lieutenant colonel in the US Army with 18 years of service as an armour officer, paints a lucid and vivid description of the movements of great armies. He includes discussions of Rommel's victory at Gazala and the subsequent stand of the British Eighth Army at the railroad whistlestop of El Alamein on the Egyptian frontier as General Sir Claude Auchinleck and the British and Commonwealth troops checked the German thrust toward Alexandria and Cairo. General Bernard Montgomery assumed command of Eighth Army in August 1942 and launched the decisive offensive against Rommel at El Alamein in October.

Forczyk has conducted tireless investigation into the strengths and weaknesses of Allied and Axis armoured forces. His discussion of the varied tank types and their attributes is illuminating for the reader, while the command decisions made by generals of both sides are evaluated against the results and through the lens of history after more than 80 years. Further analysis of anti-tank weapons and tactics is offered, while several appendices allow quick reference on the volume of tanks delivered to North Africa during the period, as well as orders of battle for both sides and statistical information regarding weaponry and equipment.

"THE AUTHOR DOES NOT NEGLECT THE HEROISM AND TRAUMA OF THE INDIVIDUAL COMBAT EXPERIENCE"

The author does not neglect the heroism and trauma of the individual combat experience. For example, he quotes Lieutenant Bill Close of A Squadron, 3rd Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment during the pursuit of Rommel's forces after El Alamein: "Just as I reached the floor of the wadi, there was an almighty bang and I found myself hanging onto the turret at a crazy angle. An anti-tank mine had blown off one of the tank tracks and a bogie wheel had collapsed. No one was hurt but the tank was completely disabled… One of my crew, Trooper Evans, looking around to see if he could spot any more mines, stood on an anti-personnel mine… Two of my crew died instantly."

The Second World War in the North African desert was brutal, presenting perhaps the most difficult climate and logistical challenges of the entire conflict. Forczyk has made a notable contribution to the depth of understanding of this legendary aspect of the war, from the big picture to the minutia, while giving comprehensive treatment to the tanks – these armoured engines – that remain pivotal components of land warfare today. As with every Osprey presentation, the volume is richly illustrated and well appointed. **MH**



An Italian tank commander surrenders to a British soldier in Libya, 1942

The book has a detailed analysis of the various tank types used in the fighting

Images: Getty

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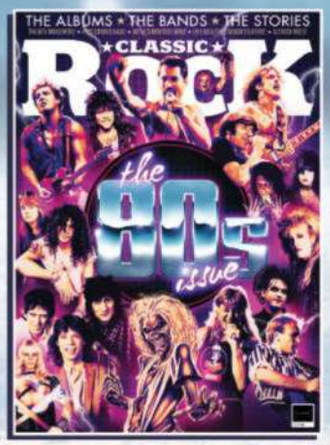

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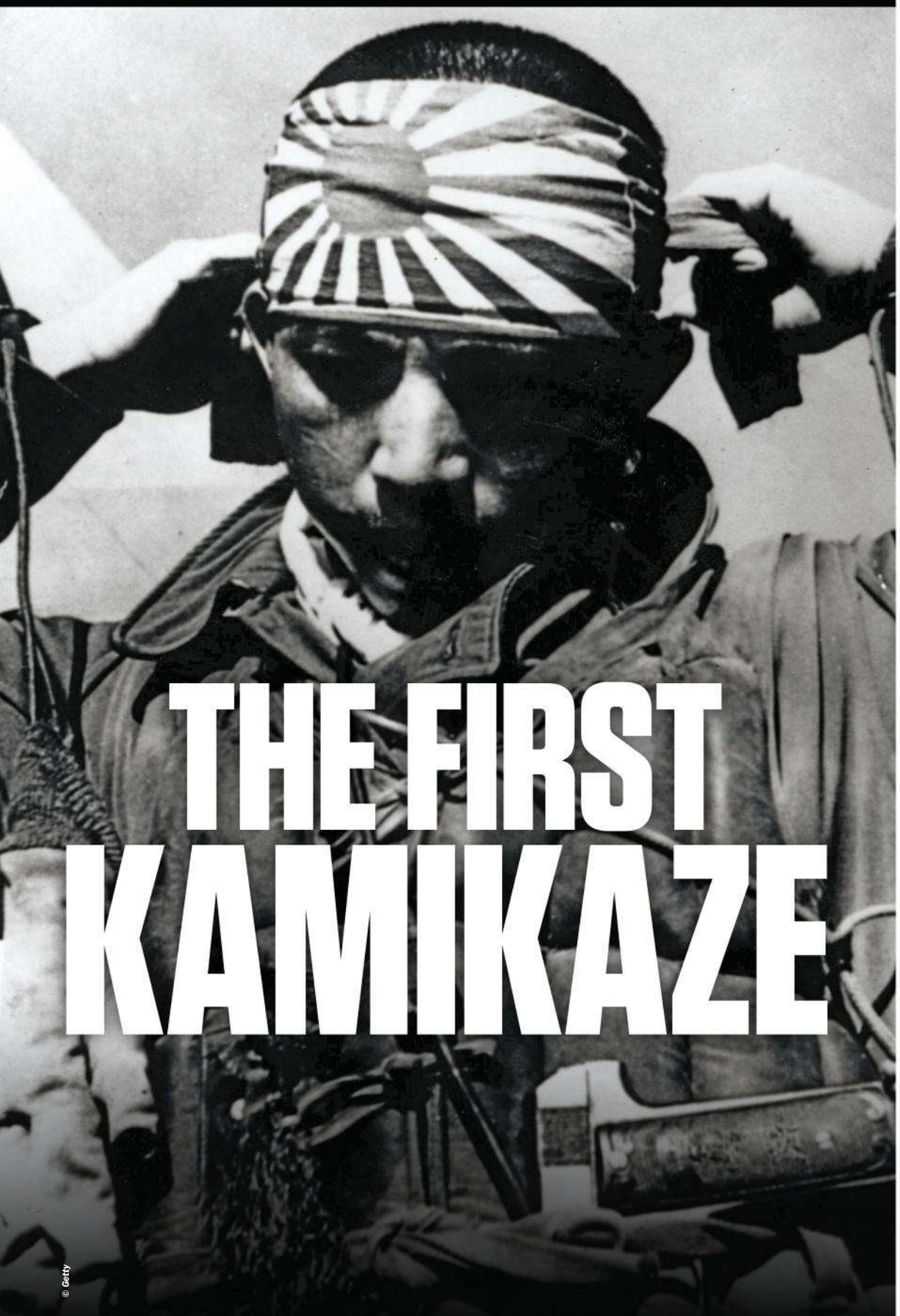

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PANCHO VILLA'S PISTOL

Mexican revolutionary Francisco 'Pancho' Villa's gold Colt revolver is set to be auctioned at the centenary of his assassination

Pancho Villa was a Mexican revolutionary leader who played a critical role in ousting the technocratic and US-backed President Porfirio Díaz, and bringing the democrat Francisco I Madero to power in 1911. The Ten Tragic Days coup of 1913 left Madero dead, replaced by Díaz's ally General Victoriano Huerta, and Villa was forced back into guerilla fighting as part of the Constitutionalist Army.

This 38-calibre gold-plated Colt Single Action Army revolver, complete with factory engraving and pearl grips, came into Villa's possession during his revolutionary activities. It features two inscriptions carved personally for Villa. The weapon dates back to 1910 and was crafted in Eibar, Spain, a city famous for its iron manufacturing and thriving arms industry. However, little is certain about how Villa obtained it.

***Below:** Pancho Villa's iconic gold Colt revolver is up for auction, with an estimated value of $650,000 to $950,000*

***Below:** Pancho Villa riding into combat, possibly at the Battle of Ojinga, one of his greatest victories*

Two stories speculate on this mystery. The first is that it was gifted to him by President Madero, and came presented in a finely crafted wooden box, decorated with mother of pearl and silver, alongside two percussion cartridges. Madero and Villa had a complicated relationship once they had taken power, with Villa convinced that the president had dropped the revolution's goals and frustrated by his re-appointment of Díaz's officials. The tension escalated until Villa was exiled to the United States. Villa continued to treasure Madero until his death, and when he returned to Mexico City 1914 he climbed a ladder to change the name of Calle de San Francisco, the most famous street in Mexico City's historic centre, to Calle de Francisco I Madero.

The alternative explanation sounds like it's straight out of espionage fiction. During the First World War, Germany became concerned that United States intervention could tip the balance of power in Europe. However, realising the USA could be distracted by its interest in preventing a successful revolution in Mexico, the German agent Felix A Sommerfeld was ordered to work his way into Madero's revolutionary government, soon becoming chief of the secret service. Sommerfeld continued to work alongside Villa as the revolution's chief weapons buyer. Some have speculated Sommerfeld gifted Villa the gold-plated Colt as a token of this relationship.

Joel Kolander, interactive production manager at Rock Island Auction Company, says: "Gold plating is an extremely rare finish for a Single Action Army, plus the factory engraving by master Cuno Helfricht makes it one of the rarest of its kind in existence. Now add the history of Pancho Villa, perhaps Mexico's most famous revolutionary, and it enters the highest levels of arms collecting."

ROCK ISLAND AUCTION COMPANY

Pancho Villa's gold-plated revolver is up for auction at Rock Island Auction Company's last premier auction of 2023, running from 8 December to 10 December. This auction, held in Bedford, Texas, celebrates 30 years of auction history for the company.

www.rockislandauction.com

Images: Alamy, Rock Island Auction Company

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